

Kristu Jyoti College

**CATECHETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF
BLESSED KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH:
A STUDY ON THE SELECTED THEMES OF A CATECHETICAL NATURE
IN THE WRITINGS OF BLESSED CHAVARA**

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for the Master's Degree in Theology with Specialisation in Catechetics

Department of Catechetics and Youth Ministry

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To

All those who guided me in my journey of life,

My friends,

And

All those to whom my life is dedicated:

The unloved, the unwanted,

The needy, the illiterate,

The poor,

The women

And

The children.

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*What shall I render you, my Lord, my God,
For all your wondrous gifts of mercy and love!
(Blessed Chavara).*

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiii
GLOSSARY.....	xiv
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1

CHAPTER ONE A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

1. Introduction.....	6
2. The Apostolic Origin of the Syro-Malabar Church	6
2.1 Historical Background for the Arrival of St. Thomas	7
2.2 Apostolic Heritage- <i>Thōmāyude Mārgam</i>	8
2.3 Early Traditions	9
2.4 Liturgical Traditions	10
2.5 The Tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore	11
2.6 <i>Acts of Thomas</i> - An Apocryphal Work	13
2.7 Opinions of Historians	13
2.8 The St. Thomas Cross.....	14
2.9 Relics of St. Thomas	15
2.10 New Sunday.....	16
3. Relations with the East Syrian Church of Persia	17
3.1 The Arrival of Thomas of Cana.....	17
3.2 East Syrian Connection and Autonomy.....	18
3.2.1 The Indian Metropolitan, His Titles and Powers	19
3.2.2 The Position of the Archdeacon of India	20

9.4 Ascetical Spirituality	47
9.5 The <i>Hesychastic</i> Spirituality.....	47
10. Conclusion.....	48

CHAPTER TWO

BLESSED CHAVARA IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

1. Introduction.....	50
2. A Short Biography of Chavara.....	50
2.1 Birth and Childhood	51
2.2 Primary Education	52
2.3 Life in the Seminary	53
2.4 A Dedicated Pastoral Life.....	54
3. Contributions of Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church	56
3.1 Ecclesial Level.....	56
3.1.1 The First Syro-Malabar Major Seminary	56
3.1.1.1 Seminary Training in the Syro-Malabar Church at the Time of Chavara	57
3.1.1.2 Seminary at Mannanam	57
3.1.1.3 Chavara as <i>Malpān</i> and Rector.....	58
3.1.2 Religious Congregations for Men and Women.....	60
3.1.2.1 Religious Life in the Syro-Malabar Church	60
3.1.2.2 The First Indigenous Religious Institute (CMI)	61
3.1.2.3 Religious Congregation for Women (CMC)	63
3.1.3 Fight against Rokos Schism	65
3.1.3.1 Rokos Schism	65
3.1.3.2 Chavara Protests against the Schism	66
3.2 Liturgical Formation	68
3.2.1 The Divine Office	68
3.2.2 The Divine Office for the Dead	69

3.2.3 The Small Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary	69
3.2.4 Liturgy of the Holy Saturday	69
3.2.5 Ritual Blessings.....	70
3.2.6 The Order of the Holy Mass or <i>Thūkāsa</i>	70
3.2.7 Liturgical Calendar.....	70
3.3 In the Realm of Spiritual Renewal	71
3.3.1 Annual Retreats for Priests.....	72
3.3.2 Sunday Sermons.....	72
3.3.3 Retreats for Laity.....	73
3.3.4 Forty Hours Adoration	73
3.3.5 Catechesis and Other Devotional Practices	74
3.3.6 Marian Devotion	75
3.4 Contributions in Education	76
3.4.1 Schools in Kerala	76
3.4.2 The Idea of ‘a School for a Church’	77
3.4.3 Mid-day Meal in Schools	78
3.4.4 Boarding for Girls	78
3.5 Communication and Media.....	79
3.5.1 The First Press in the Syro-Malabar Church.....	79
3.5.2 The Publication Centre.....	80
3.6 Contributions in the Social Level	81
3.6.1 Confraternity of St. Joseph.....	82
3.6.2 Home of Charity.....	83
3.6.3 <i>Pidiyari</i> (A handful of rice).....	84
3.6.4 Religious Harmony and Religious Tolerance	84
3.6.5 Empowerment of Women	85
3.6.6 Renewal of Christian Families	86
3.7 Chavara and His Writings.....	87
4. Conclusion.....	89

CHAPTER THREE

CATECHESIS IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

1. Introduction.....	91
2. Defining Catechesis.....	91
2.1 Aim of Catechesis.....	93
2.2 Tasks of Catechesis.....	94
3. Catechesis in the Universal Church	95
3.1 In the Early Centuries	96
3.2 Sixth Century Onwards.....	97
3.3 Sixteenth Century Onwards.....	98
3.4 In the Modern Period	99
4. Catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church.....	100
4.1 Up to Sixteenth Century	100
4.1.1 Evangelization.....	100
4.1.2 Religious Disciplines	101
4.1.3 Life Witness	102
4.1.4 Catechesis and Liturgy	103
4.1.5 Influence of Eastern Church Fathers.....	103
4.2 From Sixteenth Century to Eighteenth Century	104
4.2.1 Catechism of St. Francis Xavier.....	104
4.2.2 <i>Doctrina Christam (Christīya Tatvasamhithakal)</i>	105
4.2.3 Synod of Diamper and Catechesis	105
4.2.4 Statutes of Bishop Rose	106
4.2.5 Catechesis and Carmelite Mission	107
4.3 Nineteenth Century Onwards	108
4.3.1 <i>Nithyārādhanāpusthakam</i>	108
4.3.2 Catechesis in the Schools	109
4.3.3 Pastoral Orientation Centre (POC)	109
5. Salient Features of Catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church.....	111

5.1 Ecclesial Christian Life Formation	112
5.2 Liturgical Formation	113
5.3 Spiritual Formation	114
5.4 Asceticism and Monasticism	115
5.5 Clerical and Religious Formation	116
5.6 Formation of the Laity	117
5.7 Formation of the Catechists	118
5.8 Pastoral Care of the Migrants	120
6. Conclusion.....	121

CHAPTER FOUR

CATECHESIS IN THE WRITINGS OF CHAVARA

1. Introduction.....	123
2. Writings of Chavara	124
3. Catechetical Teachings in Chavara's Writings	125
3.1 Christological and Soteriological Elements	126
3.1.1 Christ- Emmanuel	126
3.1.2 Christ- Redeemer	127
3.1.3 Christ- Father and Mother.....	128
3.1.4 Jesus Christ- Son of God and Son of the Virgin	130
3.1.5 Titles of Jesus Christ	131
3.1.5.1 Titles Which Express the Divinity of Christ	131
3.1.5.2 Titles Which Express the Humanity of Christ.....	132
3.1.6 Cross- Divine Instrument of Salvation.....	133
3.1.7 Awareness as a Sinner- for Salvific Experience	134
3.2 Mariology	135
3.2.1 Teachings of the Church on Mary.....	135
3.2.2 Mary- Mother and Disciple.....	137
3.2.3 Mary Fulfils the Word of God	137

3.2.4 Mary in the Mystery of Christ.....	139
3.2.5 Mary in the Church	140
3.2.6 Assumption and Glory of Mary	141
3.2.7 Mary as Mediatrix	142
3.2.8 Names of Mary.....	143
3.3 On Sacraments	144
3.3.1 Baptism	144
3.3.2 Holy Eucharist.....	146
3.3.3 Priesthood.....	148
3.4 On Religious Life	149
3.4.1 Religious Life- God’s Call	150
3.4.2 Religious Vows	150
3.4.3 Religious Discipline	152
3.4.4 Return to the Original Spirit.....	153
3.4.5 Life in Christ and Spousal Mysticism.....	154
3.5 Stages of Meditation	155
3.5.1 Reading	156
3.5.2 Solitude	156
3.5.3 Meditative Prayer	157
3.5.4 Meditation	157
3.6 Catechesis through the Word of God	158
3.6.1 Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Mt. 22:11-14).....	159
3.6.2 Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15: 11-32)	159
3.6.3 Concept of ‘Bosom’	162
3.7 Directives for Families	163
3.7.1 The Rules for a Christian Family.....	163
3.7.1.1 Love as the Binding Force.....	164
3.7.1.2 Domestic Servants	165
3.7.1.3 Relationships in the Family	165
3.7.1.4 Economic Affairs.....	166

3.7.1.5 Sanctification of Sacred Times.....	167
3.7.1.6 Dignity of Work.....	168
3.7.1.7 Sacred Ambience	168
3.7.2 Christian Education of Children.....	169
3.7.2.1 Religious and Civil Education of Children.....	170
3.7.2.2 Chaste Life.....	171
3.7.2.3 Vocational Guidance	171
3.7.2.4 A Final Word to Children	172
3.8 Eschatological Teachings	172
3.8.1 The Resurrection and the Second Coming of Jesus	173
3.8.2 Theology of Death.....	174
3.8.3 The Four Friends	176
3.8.4 Theology of Purgatory	177
3.8.5 The Communion of the Saints.....	178
3.9 Christian Witness	179
4. Conclusion	182

CHAPTER FIVE

RELEVANCE OF CHAVARA'S WRITINGS IN CATECHESIS

1. Introduction.....	184
2. Catechetical Effects in Chavara's Writings	184
2.1 Promoting Knowledge of Faith	185
2.2 Liturgical Education	186
2.3 Moral Formation.....	187
2.4 Teaching to Pray	188
2.5 Education for Community Life.....	190
2.6 Missionary Initiation.....	191
3. Centrality of Jesus Christ in Chavara's Writings	193
4. Importance of Loci of Catechesis	195

4.1 The Christian Community and the Family	196
4.2 Parishes.....	196
4.3 Catholic Schools, Boardings and Catechumenates.....	197
4.4 Associations and Movements	198
5. Other Catechetical Contents in Chavara's Writings	199
6. Catechetical Maxims of Chavara	201
7. Conclusion.....	203
 GENERAL CONCLUSION	 205
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 210

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBCI	- Catholic Bishops' Conference of India
CCC	- <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
CEICS	- Centre for Eastern and Indian Christian Studies
CHF	- <i>Colloquies with the Heavenly Father</i>
CMC	- Congregation of the Mother of Carmel
CMI	- Carmelites of Mary Immaculate
CS	- <i>Compunction of the Soul</i>
CT	- <i>Catechesi Tradendae</i>
CTC	- Congregation of Teresian Carmelites
EA	- <i>Ecclesia in Asia</i>
EN	- <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>
GCD	- <i>General Catechetical Directory</i>
GDC	- <i>General Directory for Catechesis</i>
KCBC	- Kerala Catholic Bishops' Conference
NBCLC	- National, Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre
OCD	- Order of Carmelites Discalced
OIRSI	- Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, India
POC	- Pastoral Orientation Centre
RM	- <i>Redemptoris Missio</i>
SMRC	- The Syro-Malabar Religious Conference
TOCD	- Third Order of Carmelites Discalced

GLOSSARY

<i>Āshān Kalaries</i>	- The place where the initial education of the children were given by learned and elderly teachers (<i>Āshāns</i>)
<i>Āthmānuthāpam</i>	- Compunction of the Soul
<i>Chātham</i>	- A feast celebrated on the anniversary day of the death of ancestors
<i>Chāvarul</i>	- The last words
<i>Cōōnan</i>	- Bent
<i>Darsana vēēdu</i>	- House of vision
<i>Dēsakkuri</i>	- A letter patent which was given by the assembly of the parishioners to the bishop for the priest candidates
<i>Didascālia Apostolōrum</i>	- Doctrine of the Apostles
<i>Edukkumdāt</i>	- Boarding
<i>Ēl paiya</i>	- God is bright
<i>Guru</i>	- Teacher, master
<i>Gurukulam</i>	- A system of education where the student was staying with the teacher, who was an elderly and scholarly person and was learning from him
<i>Guruvē saranam</i>	- I depend on you, master
<i>Hari Sri</i>	- Praise of God
<i>Hesychia</i>	- Rest or tranquillity
<i>Hūdra, Kaskōl, Gāzā and Kālā</i>	- Syriac words used for different parts of the Divine Office
<i>Jāthikku karthavvian</i>	- The head of the community
<i>Kathanārs</i>	- Priests
<i>Kudumbachattam</i>	- Directives for families
<i>Kyane</i>	- Natures
<i>Leliya</i>	- Night prayer
<i>Malpān</i>	- Teacher
<i>Malpānates</i>	- Training houses where the priests in the Syro-Malabar Church were taught and trained

<i>Mār Thōmmā Slībā</i>	- St. Thomas Cross
<i>Mathabōdhanam</i>	- Religious instruction, catechesis
<i>Mōrōn Yēsu Masiha</i>	- Jesus Christ is Lord
<i>Nāzhikās</i>	- 1/60 parts of a day
<i>Nazrāni Māppilās</i>	- Sons of kings or first kings
<i>Neyyappam, aini, kozhukkōtta</i>	- Food items which were special to the Thomas Christians and to the Brahmins alone
<i>Pallikkōōdam</i>	- A place for education attached to the church
<i>Palliyōgam</i>	- Assembly consists of the representatives of the families and the clergy of the parish
<i>Pāna</i>	- A book which contains the whole paschal mysteries of Jesus Christ and was used to read in the Christian families during the Holy Week
<i>Pazhayakūttukār</i>	- The old party
<i>Pidiyari</i>	- A handful of rice
<i>Pothuyōgam</i>	- General assembly
<i>Propaganda Fide</i>	- Propagation of faith
<i>Pshītta</i>	- The Syriac translation of the Bible
<i>Pula</i>	- Defilement
<i>Puthenkūttukār</i>	- The new party
<i>Qualis Sacerdos, talis populus</i>	- As the quality of the priests, is the people
<i>Qurbāna</i>	- Holy Eucharist
<i>Rākkuli</i>	- Night bath
<i>Sarvēswarāya nama</i>	- Hail, O, God of all
<i>Tāli or minnu</i>	- A gold ornament used as a marriage symbol
<i>Tapas bhavan</i>	- House of penance
<i>Thamburān thunaka</i>	- Let God help
<i>Thōmāyude Mārgam</i>	- Way of Thomas
<i>Thūkāsa</i>	- Order
<i>Viswāsaparishēēlanam</i>	- Faith formation
<i>Yōgam</i>	- Assembly

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Christians are called to witness to the message of Jesus Christ through their lives wherever they are. Every Christian is a catechetical educator.¹ But every age produces some outstanding personalities because of their extra ordinary contributions in various fields - religious, political, scientific, cultural, economic etc. This study is to examine and to evaluate the catechetical vision and activities of one such personality, namely, Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara² of Kerala, in India. Blessed Chavara was the co-founder of two indigenous religious congregations: the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) and the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC). He was an eminent catechetical educator of the Syro-Malabar Church in the nineteenth century. Through his various catechetical activities he renewed the life of the priests as well as that of the faithful. His writings are a valuable contribution to the Syro-Malabar Church. In this study we see the catechetical contributions of Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church especially through his writings and teachings. We focus mainly on his writings. We analyse the catechetical elements in his writings with the help of the present authors. Therefore, the title of this study is, *Catechetical Contributions of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church: A Study on the Selected Themes of a Catechetical Nature in the Writings of Blessed Chavara.*

¹ This term is used by Thomas H. Groome in the light of his approach of Shared Praxis in Christian Religious Education. Cf. Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education & Pastoral Ministry The Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publications, 1991), 1-4. Cf. also Gilbert Choondal, "Catechesis: Naming an Evolving Process," Gilbert Choondal, ed., *Introducing the General Directory for Catechesis* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2004), 12.

² Here after we abbreviate the name Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara as 'Chavara' or 'Blessed Chavara.'

1. Rationale of the Study

Chavara was a man of faith and vision. His contributions in the field of faith education are very much admirable. As a man of vision he could concentrate at the same time on religious, ecclesial, liturgical, pastoral, spiritual, social, educational, cultural and administrative fields. His writings are also a great treasure for the Church. They are still relevant especially in the catechetical scenario of the Church in Kerala. One of the reasons of this study is to admire this honourable person, Blessed Chavara, for his valuable contributions in the Church, especially in the Syro-Malabar Church. Another reason is that this study, especially the analysis of his writings, can help a lot in the catechetical ministry, in various catechetical fields: families, parishes, schools, hospitals, media etc.

2. Scope of the Study

Blessed Chavara was a man who lived in the nineteenth century. But his vision and mission have relevance even today. It is the duty of the Church to find out new ways and means in order to transform its faith. According to the signs of the times it should come in new forms. As catechesis, the teachings and visions of Chavara also can be applied in the various catechetical fields of the Church in new and transformed forms. So, this humble attempt expects to contribute something valuable and applicable in our ministerial fields, in the matter of faith formation. The study also hopes to achieve solid information of his catechetical ministry and contribution to the Catholic Church of Kerala.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in this study is anthropological in nature. The theme begins by situating the time and context of Chavara (Chapter One), presents his contributions historically (Chapter Two) and takes into account catechetical scenario of the Syro-Malabar Church (Chapter Three). These chapters provide an adequate basis to understand the writings of Chavara in his catechetical contribution (Chapter

Four) so as to provide relevant guidelines for today from this study (Chapter Five). In this study we use the content analysis of his writings and the books written by other authors on him.

4. Articulation of the Study

The study under the title *Catechetical Contributions of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church: A Study on the Selected Themes of a Catechetical Nature in the Writings of Blessed Chavara* is divided into five chapters:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Chapter One | - A Brief History of the Syro-Malabar Church |
| Chapter Two | - Blessed Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church |
| Chapter Three | - Catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church |
| Chapter Four | - Catechesis in the Writings of Blessed Chavara |
| Chapter Five | - Relevance of Chavara's Writings in Catechesis |

In the first chapter we see a brief history of the Syro-Malabar Church. Here we discuss briefly the apostolicity of the Syro-Malabar Church and its relation with the East Syrian Church of Persia, Socio-cultural and political life of the St. Thomas Christians, their Christian life, worship, faith and communion with Rome and some important events in their history. We also discuss the meaning of 'Syro-Malabar' and important features of the spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church. In order to develop this chapter we use the historical writings of famous authors like Joseph Thekkedath, A. M. Mundadan, Placid Podipara, Xavier Koodapuzha and other related books.

The second chapter, *Blessed Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church*, presents contributions of Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church. With the help of the books and articles of different authors on Chavara we develop this chapter. It includes a short biography of Chavara and his catechetical contributions in various fields such as Ecclesial, Liturgical, spiritual, educational, communication, social etc. This chapter concludes with a short description on his writings.

In the third chapter under the title, *Catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church*, we concentrate on the catechetical scenario of the Syro-Malabar Church. The Church documents are the main sources for the development of this chapter. The books and articles of other authors related to the catechetical development of the Syro-Malabar Church are also considered. In this chapter we discuss the aim and tasks of catechesis and catechesis in the Universal Church. We focus more on the catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church and conclude the chapter with the salient features of catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church.

The fourth chapter, *Catechesis in the Writings of Chavara*, analyses the catechetical content of his writings. The primary sources for this are the writings of Chavara himself. The interpretations and explanations of these writings found in different books and articles by different authors are also used as a help for this attempt. In this chapter we discuss the Christology, Soteriology, Mariology, Eschatology and Sacraments as elements of catechetical contents of his writings. The teachings of Chavara on religious life and prayer life are also discussed in this chapter. His meditative and personal reflection of the Word of God is also taken into account. Chavara's writings are related to family catechesis, child catechesis and other catechetical dimensions too. As a conclusion we present the importance of Christian witness in catechesis based on one of his writings, *Anasthasia's Martyrdom*.

Finally, the fifth chapter introduces the relevance of Chavara's writings in catechesis. We do it by comparing the writings of Chavara with the tasks, object and loci of catechesis presented in the *General Directory for Catechesis*. The centrality of Jesus Christ and communion with Jesus Christ are the main focus here. Other elements of catechetical contents such as Mariology, Sacraments, Eschatology, prayer life, religious life, family life etc. also we present as relevant themes for today. We conclude this chapter with some relevant catechetical maxims of Chavara.

This study concludes with an evaluation of Chavara's catechetical contributions in the Church, especially in the Syro-Malabar Church. Here we

consider Chavara's writings as a mini catechism comparing it with the four pillars of catechism³ in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

³ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New Delhi: Theological Publications in India, 1994), no. 13.

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to prepare a background for the theme of our work. It is in the soil of Kerala, especially in the soil of Syro-Malabar Church Blessed Chavara spent his whole life. The history of this Church also has something valuable to say about this venerable personality. In other words, the person, Chavara too has a hand, together with our forefathers, in shaping and reshaping this particular Church of St. Thomas Christians.¹ So here we try to see a brief history of the Syro-Malabar Church. Our main focus is the inner life and identity of this Church rather than its chronological history as such. Hence we discuss here the apostolic origin of this Church and its life in the ecclesial, social, political, cultural and spiritual realms.

2. The Apostolic Origin of the Syro-Malabar Church

The Syro-Malabar Church, the Church of St. Thomas Christians in Kerala, possesses a unique heritage. According to the tradition it traces its origin to the Apostle St. Thomas. It is the most ancient Church in the whole of India² and St. Thomas is considered as the founder of this Church.³ According to the tradition, St. Thomas is believed to come to India. It is believed that about the year A.D. 52 he landed at Kodungallur on the Kerala coast; he preached the Gospel and converted

¹ The St. Thomas Christians are those who claim their Christian origin from the Apostle St. Thomas. Now they include both Catholics and non-Catholics. But here it refers to the Syrian Catholics, the most ancient Christians of Kerala, who now belong to the Syro-Malabar Church. Cf. P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians* (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1970), 15.

² Cf. Placid J. Podipara, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1979), 5.

³ Cf. Placid J. Podipara, *Four Essays on the Pre-Seventeenth- Century- Church of the Thomas Christians of India (Malabar)* (Changanacherry: Sandesanilayam Publications, 1977), 7.

high caste Hindu families. It is also believed that he suffered martyrdom on or near Chinnamalai (Little Mount)⁴ and was buried in a holy shrine at Mylapore.⁵ Thus there existed a strong consciousness of the apostolic origin of the Syro-Malabar Church of St. Thomas Christians, in Kerala.

2.1 Historical Background for the Arrival of St. Thomas

Xavier Koodapuzha in his book *Christianity in India* has written that there were constant contacts between the Middle East and India from tenth century B.C. onwards.⁶ The book *Church in India* of Varghese Pathikulangara says that South India was internationally famous for its trade in spices, even before Christ. Egyptians, Greeks, Arabs, Jews, Romans and Phoenicians came and settled here for trade. According to him the Synagogues at Kodungallur, Mattancherry, Kollam, Palayur, Parur etc. also witness to the historical presence of the Jewish colonies in Kerala.⁷ Placid J. Podipara also noted these things and says that Aramaic was their commercial language until the rise of Islam⁸ and the Jews who spoke this language were playing an intermediary role. In this way, pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, sandal wood, ivory etc. were being exported from the Malabar Coast.⁹

Besides these, Xavier Koodapuzha has written that the extensive conquests of the Macedonian Emperor Alexander the Great, reached as far as India and the Greek

⁴ It is a place in Mylapore. This place is remembered in connection with the labours and death of St. Thomas. It is believed that he was attacked by his enemies when he was in Chinnamalai and was murdered when he was in Periyamalai (Big Mount), a place near Chinnamalai, on 3 July 72 A.D. Cf. Kurian Mathothu and Sebastian Nadackal, *Mar Thomma Christianikalude Sabha Noottandukalilude* (Pala: Deepanalam Publications, 2005), 37.

⁵ Cf. A.M. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1984), 3-4.

⁶ Cf. Xavier Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1998), 31.

⁷ Cf. Varghese Pathikulangara, *Church in India* (Kottayam: Denha Services, 1986), 12.

⁸ Cf. Podipara, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, 6.

⁹ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 31.

governors represented their kings in the newly conquered areas. On the religious level also, the Buddhist monks and missionaries were going to the different regions up to the Mediterranean coast. Above all, the discovery of a sea route to India across the Arabian Sea in the first half of the first century A.D. opened a new chapter in the trade relations between India and the West. All these paved the way for the arrival of the Apostle, St. Thomas in India.¹⁰

2.2 Apostolic Heritage- *Thōmāyude Mārgam*

In the *Acts of the Apostles* we find out repeatedly the concept of *Mārgam* or “the Way” (Cf. Acts. 19: 23; 24: 22).¹¹ It is one of the most ancient titles of the Church. It stresses the practical nature of Christian living. Christian faith is not a collection of doctrines or dogmas. But it is a *Mārgam* or the ‘Way’ to be travelled. It is a way of life and a life style.¹²

In the book *Hendo Thirty Years After* it is written that the St. Thomas Christians embraced the ‘Way’ of the Gospel from the foot steps of the Apostle St. Thomas.¹³ They called it, according to Jose Porunnedom, as *Thōmāyude Mārgam* and used it to denote their religion.¹⁴ Varghese Pathikulangara says that it was formed by sharing the authentic Christ experience of St. Thomas by the people of Kerala. Hence it was a style of Christian life and it is the sum total of their liturgical, ascetical, ecclesiastical, social, cultural and political life.¹⁵ In spite of all other

¹⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 32.

¹¹ All the Bible references used in this study are taken from *The Holy Bible: The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition for India* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2001).

¹² Cf. Varghese Pathikulangara, *Marthomma Margam: A New Catechism for the Saint Thomas Christians of India* (Kottayam: Denha Services, 1989), xiii.

¹³ Cf. Navajiva Parishad, *Hendo Thirty Years After* (Ernakulam: Navajiva Parishad, 1964), 21.

¹⁴ Cf. Jose Porunnedom, “Meeting of Two Laws: Influence of Western Missionaries on St. Thomas Christian Church,” *Journal of St. Thomas Christians* 14 (January- March 2003): 147.

¹⁵ Cf. Pathikulangara, *Church in India*, 35.

external influences, Francis Kodiyan opines, that they sustained their individuality, uniqueness and lifestyle suitable to the political and socio-cultural world of India, especially of Kerala.¹⁶ According to Cardinal Parecattil, “A tradition, not written in Papyrus, not carved on stone but buried in the hearts of his (St. Thomas’) spiritual children from whom it can never be removed.”¹⁷ They found their identity in it and protected it as their apostolic heritage. So Xavier Koodapuzha says that the existence of the faithful, known as St. Thomas Christians following the *Thōmāyude Mārgam* itself can be called the most important local evidence for the apostolic origin of the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala.¹⁸

2.3 Early Traditions

According to Francis Kodiyan the St. Thomas Christians have a rich tradition regarding the apostolate of St. Thomas in India. This had been handed down from family to family orally and by folk songs.¹⁹ These songs were composed at an early period on the pattern of Hindu songs from the Vedas. Some of them are *Thomas Rambān Song*,²⁰ *Mārgamkali*, *Vēērādiān Pāttu* etc. The theme of them are mainly centralised around the life and mission of St. Thomas.²¹

¹⁶ Cf. Francis Kodiyan, *My Lord and My God: The Ecclesial Identity of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Mumbai: Diocese of Kalyan, 2002), 27.

¹⁷ Zeitler Engelbert, *Steyler Missionskronik*, Germany, 1973, 9; quoted in Paul Thenayan, *The Missionary Consciousness of the St. Thomas Christians* (Cochin: Viani Publications, 1982), 3.

¹⁸ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 32.

¹⁹ Cf. Kodiyan, 12.

²⁰ It is believed that this song is written by a disciple or a disciple’s disciple of St. Thomas and rewritten in clear and more modern language by Thomas Ramban Maliekal, the 48th priest of this family of Nirannam. Cf. K. J. John, ed. , *Christian Heritage of Kerala* (Cochin: L. M. Pylee Felicitation Committee, 1981), 113.

²¹ Cf. Ibid.

Regarding the apostolic origin of the Church of St. Thomas Christians, in an article, *Church of St. Thomas in India*, Thomas Aykara presents some documentary references. One of them is an important Syriac document *The Didascalia Apostolorum (Doctrine of the Apostles)* written at Edessa around the year 250, which gives the information on the source of the priesthood of the Church in India from St. Thomas the apostle.²² St.Ephrem (306-373), a great Father and poet of the Syrian Church refers to the apostolate and martyrdom of St. Thomas in India in his *Hymns on St. Thomas the Apostle*. One of the hymns is as follows:

The One- Begotten his Apostles chose,
Among them Thomas, whom he sent
To baptize peoples perverse, in darkness steeped.
A dark night then India's land enveloped,
Like the sun's ray Thomas did dark forth;
There he dawned...²³

St. Gregory Nazianzen (329-390), a Greek Church Father, St. Jerome (342-420), St. Gaudentius (410-427), bishop of Brescia, St. Paulinus(353-431), bishop of Nola , St. Bede the Venerable (673-735), Gregory of Tours (538-593), St. Isidore of Seville (599- 638), St. Ambrose of Milan (333-397) St. John Chrysostom (+407) etc. are also referred by Xavier Koodapuzha as those who associate Thomas with India in their writings.²⁴

2.4 Liturgical Traditions

The liturgical traditions of the Eastern and Western churches also confirm the tradition of the apostolate of St. Thomas in India. The East Syrian liturgical tradition is the common heritage of the Churches founded by St. Thomas or his disciples. Hence the feast of St. Thomas is given great importance in the liturgy of these

²² Cf. Thomas Aykara & John B. Chethimattam, "Church of St. Thomas in India," *Journal of Dharma* 14 (January-March 1989): 64.

²³ A.E. Medlycott, "The Witness of St. Ephraem and Others," in George Menachery, ed. , *The Thomapedia* 2 (Ollur: The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India, 2000), 20.

²⁴ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 33-37.

Churches. In the Liturgy of the Hours of the Syro-Malabar Church there is a week long commemorative prayer in preparation of the feast of St. Thomas on 3 July.²⁵

The Martyrology and liturgical calendar of the Roman Church also associate the Church in India with St. Thomas the Apostle. According to the Roman Martyrology, Xavier Koodapuzha noted that, the martyrdom of St. Thomas is commemorated on 21 December. According to the Byzantine liturgical tradition the martyrdom of St. Thomas in India is on 6 October. The liturgical tradition of Alexandria also follows the date of the Byzantine calendar for the feast of St. Thomas and calls him the Apostle of India.²⁶

2.5 The Tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore

The tradition says, Bosco Puthur writes, that the body of St. Thomas was taken to Mylapore and was buried there. It has also been said that his dead body was buried in a grave dug near the church and it is noted that even today the grave can be seen and the bricks used in the grave were of first century A.D.²⁷ According to Abraham Mattam this tomb was a pilgrim centre and was venerated throughout the centuries by Christians and non-Christians.²⁸ In the book, *History of Christianity in India*, Joseph Thekkedath writes as follows:

The people had great devotion to St. Thomas. Hence many of them went all the way to Mylapore to venerate the tomb of the apostle. On that occasion they naturally made it a point to visit also the church on St. Thomas Mount, where, according to tradition, the apostle was martyred.²⁹

²⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 38.

²⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 39-40.

²⁷ Cf. Bosco Puthur, ed. , *St. Thomas Christians and Numbudiris Jews and Sangam Literature- A Historical Appraisal* (Kochi: L.R.C. Publications, 2003), 187.

²⁸ Cf. Abraham Mattam, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas Christians and Her Missionary Enterprises before the Sixteenth Century* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1985), 7.

²⁹ Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India Vol. II* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1982), 27.

The first clear answer with regard to the martyrdom of St. Thomas is given by St Ephrem. He has written that St. Thomas died in India, the death of a martyr and later on, his sacred remains were taken to Edessa by a Syrian merchant,³⁰ called Khabin.³¹ Today the tomb of St. Thomas the Apostle is found under the main altar of the St. Thomas Cathedral, Mylapore. For the Thomas Christians, as Francis Kodiyan says, Mylapore has been “as Kashi (Benares) for the Hindus, or Mecca for the Moslems, or Palestine for the Christians.”³²

It is noted by Francis Kodiyan that the Venetian traveller Marco Polo in 1288 and in 1292, and Duarte Barbosa in 1515 visited the tomb of St. Thomas.³³ Besides, according to Xavier Koodapuzha, Mar Solomon of Basora in 1222, Blessed Oderick, an Italian Franciscan in 1324, a Christian Arab writer called Amir son of Mathew in 1340, John Marignoli, a Franciscan missionary in 1349 etc. had mentioned about the tomb of St. Thomas.³⁴ A statement of a miracle as St. Gregory’s description in connection with St. Thomas’ burial place is as follows:

A lamp placed in front of the place where the Apostle was buried shines day and night perpetually without being nourished by oil or anything else, simply by divine power. It is not extinguished by wind, nor is it accidentally put out. It does not diminish by burning but grows by the Apostle’s power, which is unknown to man, yet known to the power of God.³⁵

³⁰ Cf. E. R. Hambye, *St. Thomas the Apostle of India* (Kottayam: Prakasam Publications, 1984), 27.

³¹ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 41.

³² Kodiyan, 19.

³³ Cf. Ibid.

³⁴ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 40-42.

³⁵ Thomas Aykara and John B. Chethimattom, eds., *Living Flame: The Church of St. Thomas in India* (Kottayam: SMRC, 1986), 10.

2.6 *Acts of Thomas*- An Apocryphal Work

The most ancient record about the apostolate of St. Thomas is the New Testament apocryphal: *Acts of Apostle Thomas*, written in Syriac in the Edessan circle about the turn of the third century A.D.³⁶ It deals with the acts of the apostle Thomas who was bought from Christ by an Indian merchant Haban for the king Gudnapar.³⁷ It describes in detail the style of preaching of St. Thomas, through the illustration of a legendary story of the Apostle's alms-giving.³⁸ Though this work is almost like a fiction, Xavier Koodapuzha opines that its antiquity and references lead to a historical kernel.³⁹

2.7 Opinions of Historians

There are many eminent scholars in the history of the Church in India who authoritatively affirm the St. Thomas Christian tradition. Dr. A. Mingana of John Rylands Library, one of the important scholars in the history of the Church in India makes the following observation on the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas:

It is the constant tradition of the Eastern Church that the Apostle Thomas evangelised India, and there is no historian, no poet, no breviary, no liturgy and no writer of any kind who, having the opportunity of speaking of Thomas, does not associate his name with India. Some writers mention also Parthia and Persia among the land evangelised by him, but all of them are unanimous in the matter of India. To refer to all the Syrian and Christian Arab authors who speak of India in connection with Thomas would therefore be equivalent to referring to all who have made mention, of the name of Thomas. Thomas and India are in this respect synonymous.⁴⁰

³⁶ Cf. Suresh K. Sharma & Usha Sharma, eds., *Cultural and Religious Heritage of India Vol.4- Christianity* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2004), 1.

³⁷ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 43.

³⁸ Cf. Aykara, *Living Flame*, 7-8.

³⁹ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 44.

⁴⁰ A. Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, Manchester, 1926, 15-16 quoted in Xavier Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1998), 44-45.

From a manuscript work of Placid J. Podipara, a famous scholar in the history of the St. Thomas Christians in India, A. M. Mundadan quoted as follows:

Convince the Nazaranees (Christians of St. Thomas), if you can, that the Apostle St. Thomas was never in their midst. The educated among them may listen to your arguments with patience but not without their final protest. The mob will get angry with you or will put you down for a lunatic, if not for a heretic. So strong is their belief in the apostolate of St. Thomas in their midst...⁴¹

Besides these, Kuncheria Pathil has noted that, some of the travel narratives, like Cosmas Indicopleustes, an Egyptian, who visited Arabia, East Africa and India around 530 A.D., John of Monte Corvino (1292) and Jordan Catalani (1319) recorded about the mission of St. Thomas and the presence of Christians in India. The Portuguese documents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are the most important and richest sources of the Indian tradition on the apostolate of St. Thomas.⁴²

2.8 The St. Thomas Cross

In the book *Marthomma Margam: A New Catechism for the Saint Thomas Christians of India*, Varghese Pathikulangara has written that the St. Thomas Cross (*Mār Thōmmā Slībā*) is the emblem or symbol of *Mār Thōmmā Mārgam*. Its original model is seen in the chapel on Periyamala, Madras. It is the Cross carved on granite stone. Varghese Pathikulangara says that according to an ancient local tradition, St. Thomas the apostle fell dead as a martyr on this particular granite stone and the faithful kept it sacred and at a later stage the typical Cross was engraved on it (c. 650 A.D.). On 18 December 1557 during the Gospel reading at the Holy *Qurbāna*, the Cross which is in the chapel on Periyamala, sweated blood and this miracle was

⁴¹ A.M. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 4-5.

⁴² Cf. Kuncheria Pathil, "Divisions Among St. Thomas Christians & the Call to Unity," *Journal of St. Thomas Christians* 14 (January- March 2003): 155. Cf. also A. M .Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India Vol. I* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1984), 36-38.

repeated for many years on the same date, same manner. Thus, 18 December became a big feast day, the feast of *Mār Thōmmā Slībā* for the St. Thomas Christians.⁴³

Varghese Pathikulangara explains the symbolic meaning of the St. Thomas Cross in his book, *Marthomma Margam: A New Catechism for the Saint Thomas Christians of India*. He says that the St. Thomas Cross symbolises the death and resurrection of Jesus in the Indian context. It proclaims the Christological, Pneumatological and Ecclesiological specifications of the Thomas Christians. The empty Cross, without the dying figure of Jesus Christ, represents the resurrection of Jesus. The four tips of the blooming buds symbolise the new life which springs from Jesus' resurrection. The descending dove is another symbol of resurrection. As St. Paul teaches, Holy Spirit transforms Jesus' flesh-body into spirit-body and thus vivifies the dead Jesus Christ (Cf. Rom. 8: 11). The lotus, being the symbol of Buddhism, had turned out to be India's own symbol. The Cross erected on lotus, is a living symbol of faith in the risen Jesus, established in India. The three steps symbolises Calvary and signify the death of Jesus. Thus, according to Varghese Pathikulangara, St. Thomas Cross remains a unique symbol that proclaims the acceptance of Jesus Christ, who accomplished the salvation of humanity through his death and resurrection in India.⁴⁴

2.9 Relics of St. Thomas

Francis Kodiyan has written that according to the tradition on 3 July 230 the relics of St. Thomas were transferred to the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia. On 22 August 394, it was removed to a newly built church, dedicated to St. Thomas. During the second crusade (1144), the remains of the Apostle were transferred to a Greek island called Chios and where they remained until 1258. During the military journey

⁴³ Cf. Pathikulangara, *Marthomma Margam: A New Catechism for the Saint Thomas Christians of India*, 10-11.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 11-13.

Captain Leone Acciaivoli took these relics and handed over it to the Abbot Jacobus, the Archpriest of St. Mary, Queen of the Angels Church at Ortona in Italy, on 6 September 1258.⁴⁵

Today, it is written by Francis Kodiyan that, most of the relics of St. Thomas are kept at the St. Thomas the Apostle's Cathedral in Ortona, in Italy. The relic of the finger of St. Thomas is now kept at the Holy Cross of Jerusalem Basilica in Rome. In 1953 His Eminence Cardinal Tisserant brought a piece of the relic from St. Thomas Cathedral in Ortona to Kerala and is kept now at the St. Thomas shrine at Kodungallur. Francis Kodiyan noted that in 2000 His Excellency Dr. Thomas Elavanal, the second bishop of Kalyan brought another piece of relic from Ortona and is kept now at the St. Thomas pilgrim Centre, Kalyan. The pieces of relics which remained in the grave are now kept at the St. Thomas Cathedral, Chennai.⁴⁶

2.10 New Sunday

The Octave of Easter or New Sunday is a feast solemnly celebrated by the St.Thomas Christians. New Sunday, is the first Sunday after Easter and they celebrate this day in honour of St. Thomas' proclamation of faith in the risen Lord, "My Lord and My God" (Jn. 20: 28). On that day they go in pilgrimage to Malayattoor, a mountain on the banks of the Periyar River. Francis Kodiyan says that according to tradition St. Thomas is believed to have prayed on this mountain. Thus, he says, Mylapore on the East Coast and Malayattoor on the West, stand as two famous pilgrim centres, witnessing to the apostolate of St. Thomas the Apostle, in India.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Cf. Kodiyan, 20-21. Cf. also Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India Vol. I*, 47.

⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 21.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 21-22.

3. Relations with the East Syrian Church of Persia

The relations of the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala with the East Syrian Church of Persia are an established fact about the middle of the fourth century. According to Varkey J. Vithayathil, St. Thomas is considered as the founder of both these Churches. This can be, he opines, one of the reasons for the affinity between the Persian Church and the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala. Besides, in his opinion, the arrival of the Thomas of Cana at Kodungallur during the great persecution of the Christians in the Persian Empire is also considered as a turning point of the St. Thomas Christians towards the East Syrian Church of Persia.⁴⁸

3.1 The Arrival of Thomas of Cana

The Southern era started by the arrival of Thomas of Cana, accompanied by a bishop, several priests, some deacons and about 400 Christians, at Kodungallur in 345 A.D.⁴⁹ The St. Thomas Christians always remember him with great respect and regard him under the name *Cnai Thoma / Thomman*. A. M. Mundadan has written that according to the tradition, Thomas of Cana appears as the link which brought the East-Syrian Church into direct and intimate communication with the St. Thomas Christians of India. Hence it is said, “It was consequent on the arrival of Thomas of Cana that the Christians of Malabar accepted the rites and ceremonies of the Syrian Church, because Thomas always managed to get Syrian bishops for Malabar, where they were held in great esteem.”⁵⁰ According to Varkey Vithayathil, it is believed that their coming is the origin of the two communities- the *Northists* and the *Southists* among the St. Thomas Christians. *Northists* are those who trace their origin to the descendants of the first converts of St. Thomas and the *Southists*, who trace their

⁴⁸ Cf. Varkey J. Vithayathil, *The Origin and Progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1980), 15.

⁴⁹ Cf. Ibid.

⁵⁰ Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 7-8.

origin to the colonisation under Thomas of Cana. While these communities were of the same rite and of the same language, they never fostered different social customs and did not inter-marry.⁵¹ But they remained as constituent parts of the St. Thomas Christians.⁵²

3.2 East Syrian Connection and Autonomy

The East Syrian connection was to some extent beneficial to the St. Thomas Christians in India. However, in the long run, this connection began to affect against the spontaneous growth of the original community into an Indian Church of the Indian people. A.M. Mundadan comments on it as follows:

They did not care to develop an indigenous church leadership but always appointed East-Syrian bishops over the communities and kept these churches strictly under the patriarchal authority. No attention was paid to the need for developing an indigenous theology or an indigenous praxis....The apostolic Church of India was thus reduced to a dependent status which necessitated the taking over of almost all aspects of ecclesiastical life from the East-Syrian context. Thus the Indian Church was forced to put on a foreign garb.⁵³

According to A. M. Mundadan the encounter of these two Churches should have fostered a synthesis help for the organic growth of the St. Thomas Christians in India in its own environment with autonomy and freedom. But only a few elements like the ecclesiastical institution of archdeacon, parish assembly (*yōgam*) and general assembly (*pothuyōgam*) seem to have developed with some Indian features.⁵⁴ However, there is no evidence to show that the St. Thomas Christians in India in any way resented this dependence. In his opinion, the reason was perhaps, except for the presence of bishops as nominal heads, they had been free to manage their affairs

⁵¹ Cf. Vithayathil, 16.

⁵² Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 8.

⁵³ A.M. Mundadan, “The Unique Identity and Autonomy of the Church of St. Thomas Christians in India,” *Tanima* (A Review of St. Thomas Academy for Research) I (March 1993): 7-10.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 8.

under the archdeacon who was a local man.⁵⁵ Xavier Koodapuzha has written that by eighth century the bishop of the Thomas Christians had the Metropolitan title. According to him during the time of the Chaldean Patriarch Timothy I there are evidences of elections of the Metropolitan made by the people of India in the presence of the suffragan bishops. They were expected to get the confirmation of their election from the Chaldean Patriarch. The Metropolitan was known by the title of *Gate of All India*. Thus, practically the Church of St. Thomas Christians in India was autonomous and free.⁵⁶

3.2.1 The Indian Metropolitan, His Titles and Powers

The official title of the metropolitan of India was *The Metropolitan and the Gate of All India*. Short forms like *Gate of India*, *Head of India* and *Of India Gate* are also used as titles. *Gate* among the Orientals signifies *sublime authority* or *sublime and eminent power*.⁵⁷ In this situation, metropolitan of India was *Gate of All India*, or *of the whole India*. Hence this metropolitan had a privileged status. He was designated as Metropolitan Bishop, and Ruler of the entire Church of the Christians of India. He was the spiritual head and the principle of communion of all the various Christian communities in India.⁵⁸

At the time of Timothy I the Metropolitan of India and his suffragans in India were, Indians. Until his time the bishops of India were ordaining the Metropolitan by placing the letters of the Patriarch over his head. This indicates that the Metropolitan

⁵⁵ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 12.

⁵⁶ Cf. Xavier Koodapuzha, “The Ecclesiology of the Thomas Christians of India,” Thomas Vellilamthadam and others, eds., *Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1985), 73.

⁵⁷ Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 14.

⁵⁸ Cf. Joseph Kallarangatt, “St. Thomas Christians of India Ecclesiological Heritages and Perspectives before the Seventeenth Century,” *Christian Orient* 21 (March 2000): 28.

and the Gate of All India and his Indian suffragans were Indians.⁵⁹ The jurisdiction of the metropolitan extends to the whole India. According to Joseph Kallarangatt, Mar Abraham (+1597) was considered as the last Metropolitan and the Gate of All India in the Church of the St. Thomas Christians.⁶⁰

3.2.2 The Position of the Archdeacon of India

The effective administration was in the hands of archdeacons who were priests and sons of the soil. He used to style himself as *the archdeacon of India*.⁶¹ He was also known as the *Prince of the head of the Faithful*, the *Lord of the Nation* and *Archdeacon of All- India and its Confine*.⁶² He is called the head of the community (*Jāthikku karthavvian*) and was conscious of his position and responsibility. The archdeacons resisted the Latinizing policy of the Portuguese Jesuits and defended the *Law of Thomas*, their legitimate ecclesial heritage, which included liturgy, discipline, spirituality and traditions. He was their legitimate authority though there were also bishops sent from Chaldea. He was the unifying and coordinating factor of the Church. The Metropolitan was mainly concerned with the liturgical worship while the Archdeacon was responsible for the effective leadership of the Church.⁶³

The Archdeacon was *The Prince* of all the Christians of St. Thomas. He had great influence with kings and the other political rulers. Going about in state he used to be accompanied by soldiers.⁶⁴ The archdeacon played an important responsibility in the General Assemblies of the Malabar Christians. There was only one archdeacon

⁵⁹ Cf. Podipara, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, 13.

⁶⁰ Cf. Kallarangatt, 29.

⁶¹ Cf. Placid J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians* (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1970), 95.

⁶² Cf. Francis Thonippara, “Pastoral Care of Migrant Syro-Malabar Catholics,” *Journal of St. Thomas Christians* 14 (January- March 2003): 188.

⁶³ Cf. Koodapuzha, “The Ecclesiology of the Thomas Christians of India,” 75-78.

⁶⁴ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 16-17.

at one time, even though there was more than one bishop at the same time. The archdeacon assisted the metropolitan in administrative, social, material and national affairs, but in such a manner that the metropolitan remained as father and spiritual director. Visibly and socially, it is the archdeacon, who came to be considered as the head of the Indian Church.⁶⁵

3.2.3 *Palliyōgam*

The *palliyōgam*⁶⁶ had a unique role among the Thomas Christians of India. This *yōgam* consists of the representatives of the families and the clergy of the parish. Usually the parish priest took initiative for this assembly. In this assembly they discuss “the problems connected with the life and activities of the parish, such as the approval of the candidates to priesthood, spiritual welfare of the parish, the financial administration, punishment for public sinners, reconciliation in times of conflict,”⁶⁷ “maintenance of the clergy, upkeep of the church and other issues of local importance.”⁶⁸ It was the local assembly who was responsible for the construction and maintenance of the places of worship. There was also General *yōgam* consisted of representatives of all parishes under the leadership of Archdeacon. Matters of wider importance were discussed in this *yōgam*.⁶⁹

Palliyōgam was an effective means of maintaining communion and solidarity in the community.⁷⁰ It was also an expression of decentralization and co-

⁶⁵ Cf. Kallarangatt, 31.

⁶⁶ *Palliyōgam* is almost similar to the parish assembly of today. It consists of the representatives of the elders of the families and the clergy of the parish. Cf. Sebastian Nadackal and S. Kurian Vempeni, *Kerala Sabha Charithrathilude* (Palai: Catechetical Centre, 1980), 42.

⁶⁷ Koodapuzha, “The Ecclesiology of the Thomas Christians of India,” 78.

⁶⁸ Kodiyan, 66.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ibid.

⁷⁰ Cf. Koodapuzha, “The Ecclesiology of the Thomas Christians of India,” 79.

responsibility. Cooperation and equality were considered as its main motto.⁷¹ Thus the idea of the church as the community of the fellowship was kept alive through this *palliyōgam*.⁷²

4. Socio-Cultural and Political Life of the St. Thomas Christians

The socio-cultural and political life of the St. Thomas Christians has to be assessed in the background of their socio- cultural system.⁷³ In the early periods, according to A. M Mundadan, St. Thomas Christians were respectfully addressed as *Nazrāni mappilas* (sons of kings or first kings). They were peers of one of the noblest and most chivalrous people namely, the *nāyars*. They enjoyed many privileges and honours some of which even the *nāyars* were denied at that time.⁷⁴ It may interest to notice some of their customs which indicate their high rank.

4.1 Birth- Rite and Rite of Initiation in Learning

In Thomas Christian families when a child was born, *Mōrōn Yēsu Masīha* (Jesus Christ is Lord) and the child's name were uttered into the ears of the new born baby. The baby was fed with powdered gold mixed with honey or ghee immediately after its birth as a symbol of good fortune and good life. At the time of Baptism they were given a name either from the Old Testament or from the New Testament. But they were also given a call- name or pet name.⁷⁵ When it was eleven months old, it was given boiled rice to eat in the midst of family celebrations.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Cf. Kodiyan, 66-67.

⁷² Cf. Koodapuzha, "The Ecclesiology of the Thomas Christians of India," 79.

⁷³ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 67.

⁷⁴ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 17.

⁷⁵ Cf. Kodiyan, 70-71.

⁷⁶ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 80.

With regard to the beginning of education, the Thomas Christians adopted, with necessary changes, the Hindu rite of initiation in learning. Instead of writing *Hari Sri* in the raw rice, they used *Thamburān thunaka* (Let God help), *Guruvē saranam* (I depend on you, master) or *Sarvēswarāya nama* (Hail, O, God of all). After this the children were sent to the *guru*'s home for studies. The *gurus* were often Hindus and they taught the Christian children, Christian prayers and catechism.⁷⁷ They were highly respected and were invited to give blessings to these children on their marriage and other important occasions.⁷⁸

4.2 Discipline of the Grown-up in the Family

Grown-up boys and girls do not go out together nor talk together. The parents choose the partners in marriage for their sons and daughters. The father is supreme in the family.⁷⁹ Grown-up children considered it a sign of disrespect to take a seat in the presence of the father of the family and elders.⁸⁰ Men and women would not sit or eat together. To keep their family tradition the Thomas Christians would not make their daughters heirs to their properties. One without male issue would adopt as his heir a male related to him in the male line, and this adoption took place in the presence of the bishop.⁸¹

4.3 Modesty in Dress

In dress also the Christians differed a little from the upper class Hindus. Men used to wear ear lobes. They had the same hair style of the Hindus though they had a

⁷⁷ Cf. Kodiyan, 71.

⁷⁸ Cf. James Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1982), 46.

⁷⁹ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 80-81.

⁸⁰ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 22.

⁸¹ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 81.

cross inserted into the tuft of hair arranged on top of the head. Bridegrooms had the privilege of wearing a flower made of gold on the tuft.⁸² The modesty of the Thomas Christian women was proverbial. Their dress consisted of a jacket that covered the hands and the body to the waist, and a long piece of cloth reaching to the ankles and tied round the waist with a fan like appendage at the back, in a manner peculiar to them alone. When going to Church or visiting priests they would cover themselves with a big veil that left only their faces uncovered. They had several kinds of ornaments for the ears, arms, neck and feet. Brides had a gold head dress or a gold crown.⁸³ A widow wearing no ornament is also a custom followed by the Thomas Christians like that of the Hindus of the country.⁸⁴

4.4 Food and Hygiene

The St. Thomas Christians used as food, mostly vegetable curries and boiled rice. They rarely ate meat and beef and never ate pork. Alcoholic drinks were considered unbecoming to their high social status. During social feasts they would eat with their fingers squatting on long mattresses, their plates being plantain leaves folded in two. Until recently certain edibles such as *neyyappam*, *aini*, *kozhukkōtta* were special to the Thomas Christians and to the Brahmins alone. According to them the social status depends not on wealth or influence but on family tradition.⁸⁵ In the matter of hygiene and cleanliness also they were as good as the caste- Hindus. As the Brahmins they considered baths and ablutions are very important and necessary. Before entering into the church they used to wash their feet. The tanks and wells found near the ancient churches bear witness to this fact.⁸⁶

⁸² Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 23.

⁸³ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 82.

⁸⁴ Cf. Aerthayil, 52.

⁸⁵ Cf. Ibid.

⁸⁶ Cf. Aerthayil, 53.

4.5 Caste System

Like the high caste people of the country the St. Thomas Christians also observed the law of untouchability and pollution. They were very strict in keeping this caste laws. If they happened to touch or go near people belonging to the low castes, they would purify themselves by the prescribed ablutions.⁸⁷ This was a means of maintaining their nobility and rank in society. On the public roads people of the inferior castes had to give way to them, and if they do not do so, they had the right to kill them. High caste Hindus considered the touch of a St. Thomas Christian sufficient to purify articles considered defiled by the contact of low caste people. The kings and lords of Kerala invited the St. Thomas Christians to live near their residences in order to perform this service of touching defiled articles.⁸⁸

4.6 Professions

The three professions which were considered to be noble and in which the St. Thomas Christians were engaged are: agriculture, trade and military service.⁸⁹ They cleared forests and drained marshy places to cultivate paddies, coconut trees etc. They were the proprietors of pepper and masters of the public weighing office in Quilon in the middle of the fourteenth century.⁹⁰ Most of the pepper exported to Portugal was given by the Thomas Christians.⁹¹

Military service also was a main occupation of the Thomas Christians. They were excellent soldiers.⁹² Males from their eighth to the twentieth years were taught

⁸⁷ Cf. Thekkedath, 22.

⁸⁸ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 19.

⁸⁹ Cf. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India Vol. I*, 155-159.

⁹⁰ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 83.

⁹¹ Cf. Aerthayil, 54.

⁹² Cf. Ibid. , 55.

the use of weapons. Men always went about carrying weapons. A Hindu anthropologist Anantakrishna Ayyar's observation:

The Syrian Christians were trained in the use of these weapons at the early age of eight years, and continued to exercise them till twenty-five which accounted for their using them with much dexterity.... They were very expert huntsmen, soldiers, and they were, therefore held in much estimation by the rulers of the country.⁹³

They took up arms in time of war and proved their loyalty to the kings in whose territory they lived. The success in war of a king often depended on the number of his Thomas Christian subjects. This made non-Christian kings build churches and award them with tax-free lands. Many of the Thomas Christians served the kings as ministers and councillors.⁹⁴

4.7 Privileges

The Thomas Christians enjoyed a lot of privileges under the local rulers. These were given to them because of their loyalty and strength. They were known by the title, *the sons of the king*. On certain occasions- like marriage- they could use silk umbrellas, day lamps, band, bodyguards, elephants to ride on, festal sheds etc. They were privileged to use carpets and ornaments and to have a gate-house like Brahmins. They were allowed to sit on carpets, by the side of the king and his chief officials. Like this about seventy-two privileges were given to them.⁹⁵ The privileges given to them were engraved on copper plates⁹⁶ which were the Magna Carta of the Thomas Christians.⁹⁷

⁹³ Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians* (Ernakulam, 1926), 56 quoted in Francis Kodiyian, *My Lord and My God: The Ecclesial Identity of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Mumbai: St. Paul Press Training School, 2002), 68.

⁹⁴ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 84.

⁹⁵ Cf. Aerthayil, 56-58.

⁹⁶ Cf. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India Vol. I*, 166-173.

⁹⁷ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 84.

5. Christian Life and Worship

The St. Thomas Christians followed the East Syrian liturgical tradition. This liturgy is very biblical and close to the earliest Christian tradition. They firmly believed that their liturgical tradition was an essential part of their St. Thomas tradition which they called *Thōmāyude Mārgam*⁹⁸ (it is also known as The Law of Thomas).⁹⁹ Even though from fourth century onwards¹⁰⁰ they adopted the East Syrian liturgical tradition they used many local practices connected with Sacraments, Sacramentals, feasts etc. They too will help us to understand the Church of St. Thomas Christians better.

5.1 Churches

The Churches of the St. Thomas Christians externally looked like Hindu temples. The Crosses that were put up on the roofs and in front in the open air were the only thing which distinguished the Christian churches from those temples. The inside of the church was a rectangular hall divided into the sanctuary, choir and nave. In front of the sanctuary a curtain hung, and there were niches on the walls of the sanctuary near the altar. Church processions were like those conducted in Hindu temples. But the Crosses carried in their hands by the priests and the Holy Bible by the celebrant made them Christian.¹⁰¹

5.2 Liturgical Rite and Language

There is no evidence to show that in the Church of St. Thomas in India, there ever had been existed a definitely shaped liturgical rite other than the East Syrian one.

⁹⁸ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 70.

⁹⁹ Cf. Aerthayil, 30-31.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 7-8.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 86-87.

Due to the cultural, commercial and colonial relations of the St. Thomas Christians with the Middle East, the East Syrian rite was known here from the very beginning.¹⁰² Placid J. Podipara writes:

According to the Malabar tradition, among the first Syro-Malabarians there were also Jewish converts. The Apostle St. Thomas was a Jewish Christian himself. Thus it could happen that St. Thomas performed some items of the divine worship in Aramaic (Syriac: Chaldean), the language of Our Lord....St. Thomas sent Addai to Edessa, and that Marri deputed by Addai introduced Christianity into Mesopotamia (Iraq), while St. Thomas himself had (it was believed in Persia) preached in Persia proper (Iran). Thus came in the spiritual relationship of the Syro-Malabarians with the Christians of the Middle East.¹⁰³

But one cannot say with certainty when or how this liturgy came to be used in this Church. It may be supposed that at least in 410 or even before, with the advent of a Syrian merchant, Thomas of Cana, the East Syrian liturgy came to this Church of St. Thomas Christians.¹⁰⁴

The language of the liturgy was Syriac. The Thomas Christians venerated the Syriac language very much. They held it as something divine.¹⁰⁵ They highly esteemed as well as passionately attached to this language. They considered it a great privilege to have had the opportunity of transplanting the original Christian milieu into their midst through this language and liturgy.¹⁰⁶ Placid J. Podipara writes, "Since it was a popular form of Aramaic, almost the same as East Syriac or Chaldaic, that Our Lord spoke, they were right in attaching something divine to East Syriac or Chaldaic which was the hieratic language of all the Thomas Christians at that

¹⁰² Cf. Placid Podipara, *A Short History of the Malabar Church* (Kottayam: St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, 1968), 35.

¹⁰³ Placid J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Alleppey: Prakasam Publications, 1976), 56-57.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Aerthayil, 32.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Placid J. Podipara, *Four Essays on the Pre-Seventeenth-Century Church of the Thomas Christians on India (Malabar)*, 55.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Aerthayil, 35.

time.”¹⁰⁷ Fidelity to their liturgical heritage was to them a proof and guarantee of the authenticity of their faith and of their orthodoxy. Hence they strongly reacted whenever this heritage was challenged.¹⁰⁸

5.3 Sacraments

The entire sacramental life of the Thomas Christians also was a constituent element of the Law of Thomas. For the administration of the Sacraments they followed the East Syrian rite. But they followed it with necessary local adaptations and modifications.¹⁰⁹ In the book *The Thomas Christians*, Placid J. Podipara narrates it very well.

Baptism and Confirmation: Names imposed in Baptism were all scriptural except such names as George, Cyriac, Gregory etc. The paternal grandfather’s or grandmother’s name was given respectively to the first male or female child. The second male or female child likewise got the name of the maternal grandfather or grandmother. This practice is still continued. The Sacrament of Confirmation went along with Baptism without anointing.¹¹⁰

Holy Eucharist: The Thomas Christians had the greatest respect towards the Holy Eucharist. Bread freshly baked, as a rule leavened, was brought to the celebrant on a fresh leaf before the Offertory. Tradition says that in certain places they preferred lotus leaves to all other leaves. The Eucharistic wine was prepared from dry grapes. Chalices used to be adorned with small bells suspended around the brim.

¹⁰⁷ Placid J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians and Their Syriac Treasures* (Alleppey: Prakasam Publications, 1974), 23-24.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Jose Porunnedom, ed., *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Kochi: The Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia, 1996), 64.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Aerthayil, 33.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 87.

After communion they would not sleep that day during day time, nor spit except after having tasted some food or drink.¹¹¹

Reconciliation: Public sinners were punished and the punishment remitted by the assembly of the parishioners headed by priests. The priests would absolve them at the door of the church hitting them slightly with a bundle of sticks. The rite of private confession had not developed among them to the same degree as elsewhere.¹¹²

Anointing of the sick: We have found no pre-sixteenth century information that speaks of the anointing of the sick with oil blessed for the purpose. Priests used to bless the sick, to read the Gospel over them and to place upon their bodies, pieces of palm leaf or paper on which were written verses from Sacred Scripture.¹¹³

Holy Order: Priests were ordained for parishes and not for the diocese. Often they were married and were promoted to orders before the canonical age. The assembly of the parishioners presented the candidates to the bishop through a letter patent called *dēsakkuri*. This letter gave the candidates the title to be maintained by the parish. Learned priests, called *Malpāns*, were the instructors of the candidates to the priesthood.¹¹⁴

Marriage: Child marriage was the rule rather than the exception. The girl's parents, as among the high caste Hindus, had to give a sum as dowry to the boy. A certain percentage of this sum went to the parish of the girl. Several social functions such as ceremonial baths, feeding the boy and girl with sweets before and after the marriage etc. were also observed. There was no wedding ring which the East Syrian

¹¹¹ Cf. Ibid. , 88.

¹¹² Cf. Ibid.

¹¹³ Cf. Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 89.

rite prescribes; instead the boy ties a gold ornament *tāli*¹¹⁵ (or *minnu*) round the neck of the girl. It was on marriage occasions that the Thomas Christians displayed their high social privileges and the marks of their high social status more than at any other time. Even in the midst of the Hindus and the other non-Christians, divorce as such was unheard of among the Thomas Christians.¹¹⁶

5.4 Sacramentals

Sacramentals are those ritual celebrations that take their origin from the Sacraments and maintain a very close relation to them both in structure and in spirit.¹¹⁷ Here we speak about a few such celebrations those existed among the St. Thomas Christians.

a) *Divine Office*: The East Syrian Divine Office was used by the Thomas Christians.¹¹⁸ They “are exceptionally blessed with a beautiful liturgy of Hours, centred on the Mystery of Christ and the Church. It expresses a mosaic of thinking and a galaxy of imageries regarding the Church.”¹¹⁹ Varghese Pathikulangara has written that according to the tradition, every faithful, whether clergy or laity, is bound in conscience to celebrate it as far as possible.¹²⁰ The clergy celebrated it in choir and the lay people, who knew East Syriac, easily responded to the choral recitation. They recited it daily, morning and evening, in the church in choir, together with the people.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ *Tāli* is the marriage symbol which is blessed by the priest. The cross made of twenty-one small gold balls distinguishes the Christian from the Hindu *tāli*. Cf. Aerthayil, 47.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 90-91.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Pathikulangara, *Marthomma Margam*, 139.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 91.

¹¹⁹ Kodiyan, 83.

¹²⁰ Cf. Pathikulangara, *Marthomma Margam*, 139.

¹²¹ Cf. Aerthayil, 34.

b) *Burial services*: The East Syrian rite was followed for the burial services also. The other things for the commemoration of the dead had assumed a different development among the Thomas Christians. When death was imminent, the dying person was laid on the floor. Short prayers were whispered into his ears. Thus helps the parting soul to quit the world with the name and remembrance of God.¹²² Till the burial is over no food would be cooked or eaten in the house of the deceased. After the burial the priest would bless a tender coconut, drink a little of the water and then give the rest to the relatives of the deceased. All the subsequent feasts were celebrated in the house of the deceased such as *pula* and *chātham*.¹²³ They are in name and nature Hindu, but Christianised by the prayer and blessing of priests.

c) *Feasts*: Epiphany called *rākkuli* (night bath) was one of the important feasts in some places. On that day, tradition says, the Thomas Christians bathed at night in rivers or canals in memory of our Lord's baptism. In some other places for the same feast torches are lighted during the night and people cry out *ēl paiya* (Syriac: God is bright) referring to the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The 3 July was and is their greatest feast on which day is celebrated the death of the Apostle St. Thomas.¹²⁴

d) *Holy Water*: Water mixed with earth taken from the tomb of St. Thomas was used as 'Holy Water' by the St. Thomas Christians.¹²⁵

e) *Fasts and abstinences*: The St. Thomas Christians gave much importance to fasts and abstinences. They convinced that fasting is a divine treasure which makes them become spiritually rich; raises their minds to God and helps them to fight against temptations and to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁶ The chief fasts they

¹²² Cf. Kodiyan, 72-73.

¹²³ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 91-92. *Pula* means defilement. All the near relatives of a dead person were considered defiled for a given period of time. At the close of this period they would bathe and offer sacrifice and would hold a feast. The name of the feast is *pulakuli*. *Chātham* from the Sanskrit *srādha* is the feast celebrated on the anniversary day of the death of ancestors. Some would celebrate this feast every year in commemoration of their dead parents.

¹²⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 94.

¹²⁵ Cf. Ibid.

¹²⁶ Cf. Aerthayil, 142-143.

observed were: 24 days before Christmas, 3 days a fortnight and more before the great lent, 49 days before Easter (great lent), 49 days before Pentecost, 14 days before the feast of the Assumption of our Lady, 12 Fridays after Christmas and the eve of the feast of the Transfiguration. Sundays within the period of fasting were kept like ordinary Fridays and Wednesdays on which there was abstinence only from meat, fish and milk products. Conjugal acts and the use of tobacco and chewing an aromatic leaf were also forbidden on fast days. For the observance of fasts and abstinences, as well as of feasts, the day was computed from sunset to sun set. The whole day was divided into 60 equal parts called *nāzhikās*.¹²⁷ The fast days were of special prayers and of almsgiving.¹²⁸

The Holy Week was observed by the Thomas Christians in a special way by keeping vigils in churches, by giving alms lavishly and by prayers. The Holy Thursday they celebrate in their homes. The father of the family would break an unleavened bread and distribute it among the members of the family together with a sweet drink. Although several loaves of unleavened bread could be prepared, the one marked with the sign of the Cross alone would be thus distributed. If the father of the family died, there would be no solemn distribution of bread that year. Instead, the bread brought from a neighbouring family would be eaten without any solemnity. On Good Friday in sign of sorrow not even the floor of the house would be swept clean. That day all, even children, had to drink a little bitter water. From Holy Thursday night till the next Saturday, silence was to be kept by all. Some would also not taste any food or drink on these days.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 93.

¹²⁸ Cf. Kodiyan, 86.

¹²⁹ Cf. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 94.

6. Faith and Communion of the St. Thomas Christians

According to Xavier Koodapuzha, for the St. Thomas Christians the Catholic Church was a communion of Churches. They are equal in dignity, rights and obligations. They followed the apostolic tradition handed down to them by Apostle St. Thomas. They believed that the other Churches also followed their traditions rooted in their own apostolic heritage. So they were very open to these Churches.¹³⁰ They could welcome the Western Missionaries whole heartedly. There existed a cordial relationship between them in the beginning.¹³¹ A. M Mundadan narrates their attitudes:

....Their idea of the Church was more or less this: both the Portuguese and they were Christians and both belonged to the universal Church. But each local community has its own customs and usages...¹³²

6.1 The Faith of the St. Thomas Christians

There were errors and short comings among the Thomas Christians. They had some books, even liturgical, with Nestorian and Theodorian formulas and expressions. But, according to James Aerthayil, these books were in Syriac and never translated into the local language.¹³³ In the opinion of Xavier Koodapuzha, those who tried to translate the Syriac Christological terms into Latin failed to find the corresponding terms because of the difference between the Syriac terminology and the scholastic terminology. He says that their attempts without an adequate understanding of the philosophical implications naturally led to find out some errors with regard to Christology. But there are sound Christological doctrines in their liturgical texts. They believed in the Holy Trinity and believed Jesus Christ as the

¹³⁰ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 80.

¹³¹ Cf. Vithayathil, 20.

¹³² Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 33.

¹³³ Cf. Aerthayil, 23.

second person of the Holy Trinity with the human and divine natures. They also believed in the sacramental mysteries and the Church.¹³⁴ Xavier Koodapuzha quotes the following texts:

“By the power of the Holy Spirit virgin Mary conceived and brought forth the Son of God Saviour of all.”¹³⁵

“Praise be to the Child whose Father is heavenly and whose mother is earthly.”¹³⁶

“Blessed is the one who is born twice, divinely and humanly; eternally before all ages, and temporally in our day.”¹³⁷

“Blessed is the Word that was incarnate and was born of Mary.”¹³⁸

“The one who is sealed and confirmed the voice of the prophets by His second birth.”¹³⁹

“O the eternal Son who was born from Your Father, not in time, but eternally before all ages, and who in time appeared as man from Mary ever virgin.”¹⁴⁰

“To Lord of all... in two natures (*Kyane*) you are truly one Son without doubt: above on high You are from the Father without a mother, and down below you are from a mother without a father.”¹⁴¹

This was the faith which the Thomas Christians professed and celebrated in their liturgy.

¹³⁴ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 81.

¹³⁵ Hudra Ms. Cited by X. Koodapuzha, *Faith and Communion of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1982), 56-57 quoted in Xavier Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1998), 81.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid. , 82.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

6.2 Communion with Rome

Due to geographical and political reasons, communication between the Thomas Christians and Rome was impossible in the early centuries. But, according to James Aerthayil, the Thomas Christians had a clear idea of the Roman primacy.¹⁴² They had always believed in the primacy of the Pope. Paul Pallath has noted that they considered the Pope as the *Vicar of Christ* and recognized that even their patriarch received his powers from the Pope. According to him the doctrine of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome was deep rooted in their ecclesial consciousness.¹⁴³ Their books contained explicit statements about the divinely instituted primacy of Rome over the whole Christendom. James Aerthayil says that whenever there were occasions they showed their love and loyalty towards the Pope.¹⁴⁴ He says, “In spite of their pagan surroundings and the pressure of a caste-ridden society, they kept the Apostolic Gift, their holy catholic faith, intact and pure, though they were poorly instructed and, consequently sometimes misled into superstitious practices and errors.”¹⁴⁵

7. Some Important Events

The wake of the sixteenth century was a turning point in the history of the St. Thomas Christians. They had to face a lot of conflicts by the different attitudes of the Western missionaries. They were in struggle for a long period under various jurisdictions. Hence, here we discuss briefly some of the important events that occurred in the history of the St. Thomas Christians.

¹⁴² Cf. Aerthayil, 26.

¹⁴³ Cf. Paul Pallath, “Some Aspects of the Progressive Theology of the Church of St. Thomas Christians before its Westernization,” *Journal of St. Thomas Christians* 13 (October- December 2002): 67-68.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Aerthayil, 26.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. , 27-28.

7.1 The Synod of Diamper

The synod of Diamper held on 20 June 1599¹⁴⁶ was considered as a controversial synod. George Karotemprel has written that with this synod the long-standing relations of the Church of St. Thomas Christians with the East Syrian Church of Persia were terminated.¹⁴⁷ Joseph Thekkedath writes, "...the synod of Diamper achieved one of the aims of Portuguese policy in Kerala, viz. , to separate the Syrian Christians of Kerala from the Chaldean Patriarch and to extend the influence of his Catholic Majesty over those parts."¹⁴⁸ Placid J. Podipara writes, "The synod enacted fundamental changes in the rite and ecclesiastical laws of the Thomas Christians; dealt with doctrine, morals, discipline, abuses, superstitious practices and so on ..."¹⁴⁹ Thus the St. Thomas Christians came under the Latin jurisdiction. As a result a period of massive latinization of the liturgy and the ecclesial life of the St. Thomas Christians began.¹⁵⁰ This led the St. Thomas Christians to a reactive mind and they expressed their reaction through various ways.

7.2 The ‘*Cōōnan* Cross Oath’

For more than sixteen hundred years the St. Thomas Christians maintained unity among them. They were one in heart and one in mind. According to Xavier Koodapuzha, the Latinization of the St. Thomas Christians by the Portuguese generated a spirit of protest and division which culminated in what is known as the *Cōōnan* Cross Oath (Bent Cross Oath).¹⁵¹ This was on 3 January 1653. On that day a

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Thekkedath, 69.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Gregory Karotemprel, “Syro-Malabar Church Through Centuries,” *Journal of St. Thomas Christians* 13 (October-December 2002): 94.

¹⁴⁸ Thekkedath, 75.

¹⁴⁹ Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 138-139.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Karotemprel, 94.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 97.

group of priests and lay people led by the archdeacon Thomas Parambil, swore on the Bible kept on the high altar in the church of Our Lady of Life at Mattancherry and took an oath that they would not be subject to the Portuguese archbishop of Goa. Francis Kodiyan has written that according to tradition, it is believed that the crowd shared in the oath by holding on to a rope tied to a cross in the churchyard. As they hold on to the cross to take the oath, the cross bent. Therefore, the oath is known as the *Cōōnan* (bent) Cross Oath.¹⁵²

The intention of the demonstrators of the *Cōōnan* Cross Oath was to preserve their authority, which they thought was under attack by the Portuguese missionaries. Joseph Thekkedath says that by doing this and rejecting the foreign missionaries, they were declaring their allegiance to the Pope. They thought the missionaries were disobeying the order of the Pope.¹⁵³ So this oath and its consequences were the expressions of their discontent and their disappointment.¹⁵⁴

7.3 Divisions in the St. Thomas Community

According to Xavier Koodapuzha the *Cōōnan* Cross Oath was a powerful expression of the will and determination of the St. Thomas Christians to safeguard their identity, dignity and venerable heritage. Their leaders assembled at Edappally in order to discuss the future of that action. They acknowledged the Archdeacon as their head and four councillors were chosen as his assistants. Twelve priests imposed their hands on the Archdeacon and publicly acknowledged his leadership. He assumed the title Mar Thoma I.¹⁵⁵ This group (almost half) of the Thomas Christians became the Jacobites and in the course of time they adopted the West Syrian liturgy. They were known as *Puthenkūttukār* (the new party). Still they are known as the same. At the

¹⁵² Cf. Kodiyan, 31. Cf. also Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India Vol. II*, 93.

¹⁵³ Cf. Thekkedath, 93.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 49.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 97-98.

same time those who kept the old faith were and are still known as *Pazhayakūttukār* (the old party).¹⁵⁶ The latter is the St. Thomas Christians who belong to the Catholic Church, and now known as the Syro-Malabar Church.

7.4 The Historic Journey of Father Joseph Cariattil and Father Thomas Paremmakkal

The Catholic Church includes a variety of Church traditions. It is the teaching of the Church that these traditions should be learned and if there is something missed that should be restored.¹⁵⁷ Fathers Joseph Cariattil and Thomas Paremmakkal were the two great personalities who sacrificed their interests for the unity, growth and identity of the Church of St. Thomas Christians.¹⁵⁸ They stood for regaining the individuality of the Church of St. Thomas Christians. Joseph Kallarangatt writes:

A theologian and all the more an ecclesiologist is not a mere intellectual visionary or a prolific writer. An ecclesiologist is primarily a person who knows and loves the Church. He is not an uncommitted observer. His intellectual production is only a natural consequence of this commitment. From this point of view Cariattil and Paremmakkal are the greatest ecclesiologists and ecumenists that the Malabar Church had ever seen.¹⁵⁹

Joseph Cariattil was the first St. Thomas Christian who acquired a doctorate degree from a European university. He took a double doctorate in philosophy and theology from the Pontifical Urbanian University in Rome. His selfless love, service and sacrifice for the Church gained him the confidence of the whole Thomas Christians community. Francis Thonippara narrates:

Malpan Cariattil is a hero of the St. Thomas Christian community. He devoted his whole life for the noble cause of Church unity. He was perhaps

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Podipara, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, 26-27. Cf. also Thekkedath, 101.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Xavier Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharithram* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1980), 16.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Thomas Vellilamthadam and James Kurianal, eds., *The Freedom Fighters of Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: Denha Services, 1986), 41.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Ibid. , 43.

the most illustrious son of the Apostolic Church ever produced in two thousand years of her existence. A man endowed with ardent love for the Community, *Malpan* Cariattil stands before us as an example of genuine love for the Church.¹⁶⁰

It is noted by Francis Kodiyan that together with Father Thomas Paremmakkal, Father Joseph Cariattil was unanimously delegated by the General Assembly of the seventy two Thomas Christian units held in 1778 at Angamaly to present the cause of their Church before the Holy See and the Portuguese authorities in Lisbon. With great difficulties they reached there and in 1782 Joseph Cariattil was consecrated archbishop of Kodungallur in Lisbon. But on his way back, before he could reach Kerala, he died in Goa in 1786.¹⁶¹

The historic journey of Father Thomas Paremmakkal and Father Joseph Cariattil to Rome and Lisbon for the cause of unity is brilliantly depicted in the *Varthamanapusthakam*, written by Father Thomas Paremmakkal. It is said to be the first travel account in any of the Indian languages and is a masterpiece in the Indian literature.¹⁶² In the *Varthamanapusthakam* Paremmakkal compares Cariattil with Moses and says as follows:

To bring salvation to the children of Israel who lay persecuted in Egypt, God in His infinite mercy appointed Moses who was himself of their own race and community. In like manner God has now appointed as the head and the ecclesiastical ruler of our community Mar Joseph who is of our community, rite and race, born at Alangat in the family of Cariattil.¹⁶³

As a freedom fighter of the Church Paremmakkal remains the pioneer from the Kerala Church who put forward the dimension of the equality of the Churches.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Francis Thonippara, *Saint Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self- Rule* (1775- 1787) (Bangalore: CEICS, 1999), 54.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Kodiyan, 34.

¹⁶² Cf. Ibid.

¹⁶³ Cathanar Thomman Paremmakkal, *The Varthamanappusthakam*, trans. Placid J. Podipara (*Roma: Pontificiae Institutum Orientalium Studiorum*, 1971), 29.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 56.

7.5 Rokos and Mellus Schisms

Rokos was a Chaldean Catholic bishop sent by the Chaldean patriarch. But the Chaldean Patriarch was prohibited by Rome to interfere in the affairs of the Indian Church.¹⁶⁵ So Rokos was considered an intruder and was excommunicated. This brought forth the Rokos schism¹⁶⁶ in Kerala. Father Kuriakos Elias Chavara was the vicar general of the St. Thomas community at that time and he was in the forefront to fight against this schism.¹⁶⁷

In spite of Rome's clear warning and strong opposition, the Chaldean Patriarch sent to Kerala another bishop, Mar Elias Mellus in 1874. Rome acted quickly, excommunicated Mellus and suspended the Patriarch and exposed his schemes. The Patriarch submitted and ordered Mellus to return. But Mellus and his party did not obey and began organizing followers. He left Kerala only in 1882. According to A. M. Mundadan, his followers made contacts with the 'Nestorian' line of Patriarchs and finally submitted to them. This is the beginning of the separate existence of what is now known as 'The Church of the East'¹⁶⁸ Rome took these developments seriously and sent delegates to India to study the situation. This led to the final separation of the St. Thomas Christians from the Latins.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 70-73.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*, Canon Law Society of America, trans. , *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1992), Can. 1437. An action against the official authority of the Church is known as schism. Rokos acted against the commandment of the Pope and executed his power as a bishop in those dioceses which were not under his jurisdiction. Hence the originated schism is known as Rokos schism. Cf. also Kurian Mathothu & Sebastian Nadackal, *Marthoma Christianikalude Sabha Noottandukalilude* (Pala: Deepanalam Publications, 2005), 103.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Kodiyan, 35.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 74.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Kodiyan, 35.

7.6 The Restoration of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy

After a flow of petitions from Kerala which asked for a separate bishop for the Syrians made Rome pay even greater attention to the problems of the Syrians.¹⁷⁰ Their matter was discussed and as a result, Pope Leo XIII erected two Syro-Malabar vicariates apostolic, Trichur and Kottayam, by his decree *Quod Jampridem*, in 1887. The Anglo- Indian prelate Adolf Medlycott and the French Jesuit prelate Charles Lavigne were the vicars apostolic of these vicariates respectively.¹⁷¹ But the desire of the Syrians for a bishop of their own Rite and nation tempted them to send more and more petitions to the Holy See and to the Chaldean Patriarchate. So this matter was again discussed. As an outcome of the discussion by the brief *Quae Rei Sacrae*, the Pope decreed the erection of three vicariates: Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry. These vicariates were entrusted to the care of three national and ritual bishops, John Menacherry, Aloysius Pazheparampil and Mathew Makil respectively. Thus the centuries-old desire of the St. Thomas Christians to see bishops of their own rite and nation was fulfilled in the end.¹⁷²

Pope Pius X erected a fourth vicariate in 1911 the vicariate of Kottayam for the Southists. The whole development was crowned by Pope Pius XI in 1923. On 21 December of that year Pope issued the constitution *Romani Pontifices* and by which the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was formally reconstituted with Ernakulam as the Metropolitan See and Trichur, Changanacherry and Kottayam as suffragan Sees.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, 79-80.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Ibid. , 83.

¹⁷² Cf. Vithayathil, 64-68.

¹⁷³ Cf. Kodiyan, 44.

8. The Meaning of ‘Syro-Malabar’

The Syro-Malabar vicariates apostolic of Trichur and Kottayam were erected in 1887. At that time there were St. Thomas Christian communities that were not in communion with Rome. For example, the non-Catholic community, which owed allegiance to the East- Syrian Nestorian Patriarch, following the Mellus schism, and the Jacobites and Marthomites were also known as St. Thomas Christians. In order to distinguish the St. Thomas Catholic Christians from these non-Catholic Christian communities and from the Latin Catholics, the name Syro-Malabar was given to the St. Thomas Catholic Christians.¹⁷⁴

The liturgical language of the St. Thomas Catholic Christians was East Syriac. The first part of the hyphenated word, ‘Syro’ refers to both Syriac, the liturgical language and to the East- Syrian connection of the Syro-Malabar Church. The second part ‘Malabar’ does not refer to the British Malabar, which is the Northern end of Kerala. But it refers to the southwest coast of India, the home of St. Thomas Christians which today is known as Kerala.¹⁷⁵

9. Features of the Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church

The spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church grew and developed under different periods in the history. When we analyse we can divide these periods as the Indian period, the Chaldean period, the Latin period and finally the Malabar period.¹⁷⁶ The spirituality thus developed in the Syro-Malabar Church has different features such as the apostolic, liturgical, biblical, ascetical, monastic, missionary etc. and they constitute the very uniqueness and identity of this Church.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 45.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 45-46.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. George Nedungatt, “Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church,” Augustine Thottakkara, ed. , *East Syrian Spirituality* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1990), 148-151.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Kodiyan, 76.

9.1 Apostolic Spirituality

The faith of the Church rests on the Christ- experience of the Apostles. All the Apostles had a personal experience of Christ and they handed down this experience to various Churches with a personal colouring. The unique personality and background of each Apostle brought in something unique into his witness and they transmitted this to the Churches wherever they were. With regard to the Syro-Malabar Church it is believed that the Christ- experience of the Apostle Thomas forms part of its original patrimony and hence of its spirituality.¹⁷⁸

The essential part of the heritage of the Thomas Christians contains the Christ-experience of the Apostle Thomas. Thomas is the apostle who made the most sincere profession of faith in Christ: “My Lord and My God” (Jn. 21: 28). It was the most explicit Christological profession of faith. It forms the conclusion and climax of a whole series of confession of faith in Christ.¹⁷⁹ The spirituality of Thomas is the spirituality of Jesus himself. That is, “to drink the chalice given by the Father” (Jn. 18: 11), to “keep the Father’s commandment and abide in his love” (Jn. 15: 10) and to “do always what is pleasing to him” (Jn. 8: 29). He was ready to follow Jesus till death and thus a model for a true disciple of Jesus. It is this spirituality that Thomas carried on his way to India and imparted it into this land.¹⁸⁰

9.2 Liturgical Spirituality

Liturgy is the heart of ecclesial life. In the Syro-Malabar Church the faith is developed and taught mainly in and through the liturgical celebrations or worship.¹⁸¹ That is, the Church manifests its faith in full communion with the one, holy, catholic

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Nedungatt, 154.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Kodiyan, 78.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Nedungatt, 161.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Aerthayil, 78-79.

and apostolic Church through its liturgical celebrations. The liturgy they celebrate has the Trinitarian, Christological and Pneumatological foundations. The Church is presented typically as a mystery and is expressed through types, symbols, figures and allegories. The attitude of love and fear towards God is one of the fundamental features of this liturgy. This liturgy is centred on the temporal cycle, which commemorates the mysteries of Jesus Christ.¹⁸² James Aerthayil narrates the aims of the celebration of this liturgy as follows:

- a) The celebration of this liturgy aims the glory of the Adorable Trinity.
- b) This liturgical celebration is to offer glory, honour, thanksgiving and worship to God.
- c) It is for the propitiation of debts and remission of sins.
- d) It is for the renewal and salvation of our bodies and new life in the kingdom of heaven.
- e) It is for the Church and for the people of God.
- f) This celebration is for the dead.
- g) This is for peace and tranquillity.
- h) This liturgical celebration is for the material welfare of the whole world.
- i) We celebrate this liturgy so that we may become perfect witness of God's glory, pure sanctuaries in His honour and holy temples fit for His habitation.¹⁸³

Thus this liturgy helps the faithful to become a worthy dwelling place for the Holy Trinity and it creates a profound sense of the presence of God and invites them to live in His presence, which is the characteristic fruit of a liturgical spirituality.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Cf. Kodiyan, 79.

¹⁸³ Cf. Aerthayil, 93-94.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 136.

9.3 Biblical Spirituality

The spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church is also a lived spirituality based on the Holy Scriptures. They used the Syriac translation of the Bible called *Pshitta*. They have a great devotion to the Bible. High reverence is given to the Holy Bible during the liturgy. The Gospel for liturgical use is always kept on the altar in the sanctuary and was carried in procession by the clergy during the liturgical celebrations.¹⁸⁵ The deacons were asked to learn the whole Psalter by heart. The theological formation of the clergy was based on the Bible and the candidates to the priesthood were required to copy out it. Though the Bible was in Syriac the faithful could not even read or understand it at all. So the priests who were masters in the Syriac language interpreted it in a meaningful way by homilies, catechesis, symbols etc. The complete Bible was translated into Malayalam in 1841 by the Protestant missionaries. But the Catholics translated it into Malayalam only in the second half of the twentieth century. After that there is a sudden growth in the Biblical spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church.¹⁸⁶

9.4 Ascetical Spirituality

The ascetical lifestyle and practices were very much highlighted in the spirituality of the St. Thomas Christians. Francis Kodiyan has written that they were very generous in practising penance, fast, austerity and mortification.¹⁸⁷ It was never considered to be an act of private devotion but it was a part and parcel of the public worship of God. That is, according to James Aerthayil, their asceticism was based on the theology, liturgy and canonical discipline of their Church. Fasting was the main form of penance for them and it was written by James Aerthayil that they had the

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Kodiyan, 85.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Nedungatt, 177-178.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Kodiyan, 86-87.

spontaneous feeling of its necessity.¹⁸⁸ This spontaneous acceptance of Christian asceticism is a notable character of their spirituality. The spirit of the liturgical seasons also invites the faithful to lead a life of prayer and penance and a life of continued Christian renewal. So James Aerthayil opines that it might have been a continuous inspiration for an authentic Christian life for the Thomas Christians. Through liturgical services, continued prayers and ascetical practices they were establishing a close relation with the Paschal Mystery of Christ and thus achieving their full Christian meaning.¹⁸⁹

9.5 The *Hesychastic* Spirituality

Another realm of the spirituality of the St. Thomas Christians is the spirituality of the heart. According to Francis Kodiyan it is called the *hesychastic* spirituality. It refers to the total integration of the person, in meeting with God in prayer. The Thomas Christians thought, according to Francis Kodiyan, it was necessary to flee to solitude in order to reach a state of integration. They tried hard for reaching this state of integration of their body, soul and spirit which they called *hesychia*, meaning rest or tranquillity.¹⁹⁰ It is a total surrender in the hands of God as His “hand-maid” (Lk.1:38).

The spirituality which we called the prayer of the heart is a way of life. According to Jacob Vellian it contains the constant control of the thoughts by vigilant attention to the presence of the indwelling God. According to him it creates an abiding sense of sorrow for sin in order to put one’s mind into one’s heart. This is the

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Aerthayil, 200-201.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Kodiyan, 87.

secret of a Christian, having this spirituality, which helps him to silence his heart in order to listen to God's word speaking within.¹⁹¹

10. Conclusion

Church is a divine mystery. She reveals her true identity to her children in different ways and in different times. It is the duty of the children to relive this true identity of the Church in order to fulfil the mission which Jesus entrusted to her. A historical study can help a lot to get a sense with the Church. It is believed that the Syro-Malabar Church is blessed with the Christ experience of Apostle Thomas. Her faith life is based on the Christ-experience transmitted to her by the Apostle. It was the foundation and from here the Church grew through the centuries. These were a period of faith formation of her children and it still continues. The faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church are very proud of their apostolic heritage that we have seen as the Law of Thomas. When the life of the Church passed through centuries, because of certain unfavourable situations, some how it lost its true sense of identity. But there were always people like Father Joseph Cariattil and Father Thomas Paremmakkal in order to preserve the traditional heritage of the Church. Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara was another holy and great person who lived in this Church with a mind of total dedication. When the Church faced a great schism called Rokos schism, he was in front to save his own flock from the spiritual death caused by losing their faith and communion with the Church.

The aim of this chapter was to open a window to understand the theme of our work. We have seen a very brief history of the Syro-Malabar Church, especially its socio- political, cultural, ecclesial and spiritual realms. It is in this shaped and reshaped history of the Syro-Malabar Church we try to find out the contributions of Blessed Chavara in the matter of faith and Christian formation. As a good messenger of Good News he protected and nourished the sheep of the Syro-Malabar Church in

¹⁹¹ Cf. Jacob Vellian, "Liturical Spirituality," Thomas Vellilamthadam and others, eds., *Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1985), 184.

their own sheepfold. Blessed Chavara, a man of prophetic vision, dreamt and marked a new face to the Syro-Malabar Church. In his contributions he is an outstanding figure in the Syro-Malabar Church. So we will discuss in the next chapter the life of Chavara in short and his various contributions for the Christian formation of the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church.

CHAPTER TWO

BLESSED CHAVARA IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

1. Introduction

In the last chapter we saw a brief history of the Syro-Malabar Church. Here we see the life and mission of Blessed Chavara in this Syro-Malabar Church. From that we like to highlight the catechetical contributions of Chavara in various fields. Chavara, a great man, was a pioneer in the field of several catechetical activities in the history of the Church of St. Thomas Christians, in Kerala. He was a man of God, who lived in the nineteenth century with a vision of twentieth and twenty first centuries. His life in the Church reflects the depth of his faith experience and spirituality; it reflects the breadth of his social concern and solidarity; it explains the length of his outreaching capacity; and finally it draws the height of his prophetic vision which placed him between God and man and made him a channel of God's message to the people of his time. So our concern is to bring forth the valuable contributions of Chavara in the field of faith formation, which planted and bloomed in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church, in the soil of Kerala. For a better understanding of this first we see a short biography of Chavara and then to his catechetical contributions in a special way.

2. A Short Biography of Chavara

“Men come and go. Time passes by. But great men never die. They live through their message. Not all great men are holy. But all holy persons are great. Greatest greatness is sanctity.”¹ Chavara proved his greatness through his sanctity. He still lives- by his holiness and through his great messages- in the heart of the Syro-Malabar Church. “Saints may not need us, as we need them, and in a particular way they glorify the places in which they lived and they have

¹ Joseph Pastor Neelankavil, “Forward” in Valerian Plathottam, *Blessed Kuriakos Elias Chavara* (Cochin: K.C.M. Press, 1986), iii.

stamped there the indelible marks of their passing. They do not stand alone, but by a sort of personal magnetism bring together a number of persons to feel together, to work together and build up God's Church.”² This is what we can see in the person of Chavara also. In order to understand such a great person here we have a short description of the history of his life.

2.1 Birth and Childhood

Chavara was born on 10 February, 1805, in Kainakary, a village in Kerala, India.³ He was the youngest child of his parents Kuriakose and Mariam Chavara.⁴ At Baptism he received the name Kuriakose.⁵ He had one brother and four sisters. His parents brought him up with special care and his presence gave joy to the family as well as to all their relatives and friends.⁶ His mother was a pious woman, an exemplary Christian lady and she took special care in the Christian education of her son.⁷ She taught him even at his early age the mysteries of faith, and prayers like *Angelus*, Our Father, Hail Mary etc. She used to pray at midnight and made her baby Kuriakose also wake up to pray with her.⁸ Blessed Chavara recalls his mother’s dedicated life and his Christian upbringing by her in his poem *Āthmānuthāpam* (Compunction of the Soul) as follows:

Mixed in her sweet milk, she regaled me
With thoughts of heaven, and words of grace so pure!

² Kuriakose Elias Vadaketh, “Personality and Mission of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara,” *Herald of the East* 1 (April 1992): 122.

³ Cf. Sebastian Punayar, “Biographical Sketch of Chavara,” in Paul Kalluveettil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds., *The Lord of Heaven & Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, CMI* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 93.

⁴ Cf. Z .M. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, trans. Sheila Kannath (Kottayam: Deepika Book House, 1993), 2.

⁵ Cf. Joseph Kanjiramattathil, *The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1986), 1.

⁶ Cf. Canisius, *The Servant of God Father Kuriakos Elias Chavara* (Mannanam: St. Joseph’s Monastery, 1970), 3.

⁷ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 2.

⁸ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 1-2.

And when reason grew strong, my little mind
Patiently, informed, to lisp holy names.

.....
As at midnight she rose and knelt at prayer
Warding off sleep and petty dullness to the air
Long hours, on her knee in prayer she stayed
Leaning on her then I would seat myself

.....
And, when my infant tongue' 'gan to lisp,
Up to the sky, her finger pointing oft
The holy names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
She, my noble Mother made me repeat.⁹

When Chavara was a baby, his mother took him to the famous Vechoor church and dedicated him to Blessed Virgin Mary.¹⁰ The mother often reminded the child the words of the priest said to her at the time of dedication:

“Tend him with care; know you that he’s no more yours
But Our Lady’s- solemn your sacred bond!”¹¹

Thus the true Christian family atmosphere helped baby Kuriakose to grow “in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favour” (Lk. 2: 52).

2.2 Primary Education

At the age of five Chavara began his primary education under a Hindu teacher and he learned Malayalam, Arithmetic, Tamil and Sanskrit for five years. He got the possible education, what was available for the common people at that time in Kerala.¹² As a little boy he was liked and loved by each and everyone because of his gentleness and sweetness, in words and deeds. Even at a very young age he seemed to be more interested in spiritual practice than in general

⁹ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, Mary Leo, trans. , *Complete Works of Blessed Chavara Vo. II* (Mannanam: The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1989), I: 49-70.

¹⁰ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 3.

¹¹ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, II: 15-16.

¹² Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 2.

education.¹³ He used to serve at Holy Mass at that age when he was not even able to lift the Missal. Even as a boy he had great attraction to priestly and holy life.¹⁴ At the age of eleven he felt called by God to serve Him in priesthood and at the age of thirteen by the help of Father Thomas Palackal, his director, he entered the seminary at Pallipuram.¹⁵

2.3 Life in the Seminary

In the seminary Chavara committed himself to the care and direction of his Rector, Father Thomas Palackal. He was greatly influenced by his rector of his austere and disciplined life of prayer and study.¹⁶ Following the model of his teacher, he was also very much serious in his religious studies and spiritual life.¹⁷ Father Leopold, his spiritual director, after an intimate and personal knowledge of him, commented as follows:

As would be endorsed by many of his colleagues still alive, Father Kuriakos was zealous in the service of God without any consideration for worldly achievements. He zealously attended to his study. He was quite orderly and God fearing. He was pleased with, and charitably disposed to his fellow students. He deprecated the ill-temper and impatience that often characterised youngsters.¹⁸

Kuriakose chose as his motto “The Lord is my chosen portion” (Ps. 16: 5) when he received tonsure in 1818. He stood by this motto even at the time of great trial.¹⁹ It is very clear when his parents and his only brother died one after the other during his seminary life. He became the one and only inheritor to the

¹³ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 4.

¹⁴ Cf. Canisius, 4.

¹⁵ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 2-3.

¹⁶ Cf. Punayur, 93.

¹⁷ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 11.

¹⁸ Leopold Beccaro, *Short Biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, quoted in K. C. Chacko, *Blessed Father Kuriakos Elias Chavara* (Mannanam: St. Joseph’s Monastery, 1986), 17.

¹⁹ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 16.

family wealth and his relatives pleaded with him very strongly to leave the seminary and to take up the care of the family. But he continued in the seminary with a renewed dedication, leaving the care of the family to the relatives. Kuriakose received sub-diaconate in 1827 and diaconate in 1828. On 29 November 1829 he was ordained priest by Bishop Maurilius Stabilini and celebrated his first Holy Mass in his parish church at Chennankary.²⁰

2.4 A Dedicated Pastoral Life

After the ordination Chavara spent some time in pastoral ministry in his own parish and nearby parishes. Then he went back and assisted Father Palackal in the seminary at Pallipuram. He was the vicar of the church at Pallipuram from 1832- 1834. At that time he used to visit the houses and helped the people, especially the sick, to make confession and to receive the Holy Communion. As the vicar he had the zeal for the salvation of his people of that parish. It was his desire not to allow even a single soul to lose its life due to his laziness and this desire strengthened him to serve them at day and night.²¹

One of the important events after his ordination was the laying of the foundation stone for a religious institute (Carmelites of Mary Immaculate- CMI) at Mannanam together with Father Palackal and Father Thomas Porukara. In 1833 a seminary was started at Mannanam and Chavara continued to teach both at Pallipuram and Mannanam. In 1844 he was raised to the position of *Malpān* (*guru* or teacher in the seminary). In 1846 he started a Sanskrit School at Mannanam. On 8 December 1855 Chavara made his religious profession in the Congregation (CMI), which he started together with Father Palackal and Father Thomas Porukara, and took the religious name Kuriakose Elias of the Holy Family.²²

²⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 3.

²¹ Cf. John Romeo Pattassery, *Vazhthappetta Chavarayachan: Vyakthiyum Veekshanavum Vol. I* (Alwaye: Chavara Books & Publications, 1989), 44 - 45.

²² Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 3-4.

Chavara and his companions organized retreats and spiritual missions all over Kerala and they were recognized as retreat preachers. In 1861 Chavara was appointed as Vicar General of the Syro-Malabar Church and he fought against Rokos schism. In 1866 he started a religious congregation for women (Congregation of the Mother of Carmel - CMC) at Koonammavu in collaboration with Father Leopold Beccaro OCD. Chavara fell sick towards the end of 1870 and on 3 January 1871 he left the world in order to receive the eternal reward from God for his saintly, dedicated life. He was buried in the monastery chapel at Koonammavu and in 1889 his mortal remains were transferred to St. Joseph's Monastery, Mannanam.²³

Pope John Paul II, during his visit to India on 8 February 1986, at Kottayam, declared Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Blessed.²⁴ Chavara, a man who knew the heart beat of his people, lived a life of love which manifested not only his love to God but also to His people. In the ‘forward’ to the biography of Chavara by Father Valerian late Archbishop Mathew Kavukatt wrote:

While all his life was a song of love and union with God, he never forgot to sing about the common man and toil day and night for his needs. There was nothing vague about his love of his neighbour, it was definite and as clear as his love of God. He was never a moody mystic lost in the hazy clouds of day-dream, but had his feet firmly on the ground.²⁵

Cardinal Mar Antony Padiyara also had admired him and he wrote, “Blessed Chavara was a man of the time. He did many good things, more than a man could do in his life time. Thus he blessed the existing generation and the coming generations.”²⁶

²³ Cf. Ibid. , 4-5.

²⁴ Cf. Punayur, 96.

²⁵ Mathew Kavukatt, “Forward,” in Valerian Plathottam, *Blessed Kuriakos Elias Chavara* (Cochin: K.C. M Press, 1986), v.

²⁶ Antony Padiyara, “Message,” in J.S. Thekkumkal, ed. , *Itha Chavarayachan* (Cochin: The CMI General Department for the Media of Communication, 1989), ix.

3. Contributions of Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church

Catechesis in the Church includes faith formation in various levels such as ecclesial, liturgical, spiritual, social etc. Chavara was a person filled with deep love for the Church. He loved the Church and desired that all the faithful should lead an authentic and energetic Christian life.²⁷ So he gave his first and foremost concern for the pastoral care of the people and for that he extended his hands to the various catechetical dimensions of the people in the Syro-Malabar Church such as ecclesial, liturgical, educational, spiritual, communicational, social etc.

3.1 Ecclesial Level

Chavara, a true son of the Church, looked at his Mother Church with love and reverence.²⁸ It was his desire that all the faithful should be nourished and strengthened by the Holy Eucharist and other Sacraments²⁹ administered by the Church. With this intention he turned first towards the clergy, then to the religious, the laity and society at large. So here we discuss his contributions of establishing seminaries, religious institutes for men and women, fighting against Rokos schism etc.

3.1.1 The First Syro-Malabar Major Seminary

According to Chavara, priests lacking learning are not only useless for others but also can be the cause of their eternal death.³⁰ Priests are the instructors in the faith and it is their duty to do their best for the growth of their communities

²⁷ Cf. Mathew Kaniamparampil, “Blessed Chavara and his Unique Contributions to the Church in India,” *Herald of the East* 6 (December 2004): 2.

²⁸ Cf. Thomas Panthaplackal, “The Ecclesial Dimension in Blessed Chavara’s Endeavours,” *Herald of the East* 6 (January- July 2003): 7.

²⁹ Cf. Kaniamparampil, “Blessed Chavara and His Unique Contributions to the Church in India,” 2.

³⁰ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 18.

in the faith.³¹ So he realized that giving solid formation to the priests was the most important and greatest need of that time. His effort in this field was a lot. To understand this, first we see the seminary formation in the Syro-Malabar Church at that time.

3.1.1.1 Seminary Training in the Syro-Malabar Church at the Time of Chavara

Priests in the Syro-Malabar Church were taught and trained in the domestic seminaries called *malpānates*.³² *Malpānate* system is an ancient system of giving training for the priest candidates among the St. Thomas Christians. These training houses are known as *malpānates*. The training there was a kind of *gurukulam*. The student was staying with the *Malpān* or *guru*, who was an elderly and scholarly person and was learning from him. The intellectual, pastoral and spiritual areas were well integrated in their training system.³³

However, the missionaries, who came to Malabar at different times, had started seminaries in the western style. But they all ceased to exist with the departure of the respective missionaries. Even in the nineteenth century, the candidates of the Syro-Malabar Church were mostly sent to the domestic seminaries. Joseph Kanjiramattathil has written that there were twenty of such domestic seminaries in Malabar at the time of Chavara.³⁴

3.1.1.2 Seminary at Mannanam

The formation of priest candidates in the domestic seminaries had many advantages. But in its turn it had certain disadvantages too. At the time of founding of the new religious house Chavara and his companions felt the urgent

³¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* (Homebush: Society of St. Paul, 1980), no. 64.

³² Cf. Kanjiramattathil , 23.

³³ Cf. Kallarangatt, 34.

³⁴ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 24.

need of a well-organized seminary.³⁵ Father Valerian writes, “At the time the religious house was founded at Mannanam there was a crying need for a major theological seminary and such a one was started at Mannanam in 1833.”³⁶ Thus the establishment of a seminary was one of the certain events which fulfilled the vision of Chavara to bring in a spiritual renewal for the whole Church of Malabar. Thomas Panthaplackal writes:

In this attempt to bring in the proposed spiritual renewal of the Church, the first thing that struck Father Chavara was a well-conducted seminary.... Thus in 1833, i.e., two years after the foundation stone was laid for the Monastery, the seminary was started at Mannanam. It also became the first organized seminary for the Syro-Malabar Church, which started with two members, but later to accommodate between 100 and 150 students at a time.³⁷

The Archbishop Francis Xavier encouraged this effort and after the death of Father Palackal, Chavara was promoted as the *Malpān* and he was the only one in charge of the affairs of the seminary after the death of Father Porukara.³⁸

3.1.1.3 Chavara as *Malpān* and Rector

The edict sent by Archbishop Francis Xavier to Mannanam, promoting Chavara to be *Malpān* shows that he had great respect towards this great person. The edict says:

...I am highly impressed by your virtues and efficiency and appoint you the Examiner for all the priests of the Syrian rite under my jurisdiction, and the Malpan of all theological studies.³⁹

³⁵ Cf. Ibid.

³⁶ Valerian, 10.

³⁷ Panthaplackal, 17.

³⁸ Cf. Valerian, 10-11.

³⁹ Francis Xavier, The edict which was sent to Chavara is translated and quoted in Z. M. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, trans. Sheila Kannath (Kottayam: Deepika Book House, 1993), 42.

As the *Malpān* and rector of the seminary Chavara found that the building at Mannanam was not sufficient to serve the needs of a growing community. So under the instructions from the Archbishop he opened more seminaries,⁴⁰ one at Vazhakulam in 1866 and other at Elthuruth in 1868.⁴¹

Chavara was convinced that priests are the pulse of the Church and so he spent most of his life for the priestly formation. He realized that the priest is the mediator between God and human kind. So he told firmly to the priests to sanctify the world by their prayers and the holy sacrifices at the altar. He says:

This being so, you, as a consecrated priest and a minister of God, responsible for the care of souls, should by your private and official prayers and by the Holy Sacrifice at the altar, check the wrath of God and, as it is your duty, to pray to the Almighty for sinners, to stop his displeasure towards them.⁴²

For the formation of the seminarians Chavara took all the troubles patiently. For them he could be an inspiring model too. Joseph Kanjiramattathil writes:

He taught his disciples both by words and deeds. His zeal for the salvation of others and the different pastoral activities ensuing from it, such as preaching, administering the sacraments certainly influenced the seminarians. Lessons are most effective when words are followed by deeds. One can imagine how exacting his position as the rector and *Malpan* was, which he had to carry out in the midst of his other duties as the superior of a new-born religious Congregation. But he took all the troubles with patience because he knew well the importance of forming good shepherds for the flock.⁴³

⁴⁰ Cf. Valerian, 11.

⁴¹ Cf. Panthaplackal, 17.

⁴² Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Dhyanasallapangal*, Z.M. Moozhoor, ed. , *Chavarayachente Sampoorna Kruthikal Vol. III* (Ernakulam: The Steering Committee for Vice- Postulator, 1986), 58 quoted in Thomas Panthaplackal, “The Ecclesial Dimension in Blessed Chavara’s Endeavours,” *Herald of the East* 6 (January- July 2003): 20.

⁴³ Kanjiramattathil, 26.

3.1.2 Religious Congregations for Men and Women

One of the greatest contributions of Chavara to the Church was the founding of indigenous religious congregations. When he was a seminarian, Chavara observed the need of a renewal in the Syro-Malabar Church. He found that this Church did not have its own religious communities, which could strengthen that Church. So he had a discussion with Father Palackal and Father Porukara,⁴⁴ who also had a strong attraction for the life of solitude.⁴⁵ To understand its significance in the Syro-Malabar Church, we have to examine first the history of the religious life among the St. Thomas Christians at the time of Chavara.

3.1.2.1 Religious Life in the Syro-Malabar Church

The historians testify that from the beginning, among the St. Thomas Christians of India there were men and women who were living in caves practising chastity strictly. Joseph Kanjiramattathil has noted that there was a monastery near the grave of St. Thomas at Mylapur where the inmates were spending their time in prayer, meditation and silence.⁴⁶ In the sixteenth century also the historians recorded about the existence of religious life for men and women in Kerala.⁴⁷ Moreover it is evident from the history of Indians, whatever may have been their religion, they have always strived after higher spiritual perfection and chosen to follow the better way of religious life.⁴⁸ So it was not difficult for the St. Thomas Christians to lead this kind of highly disciplined monastic life.

⁴⁴ Cf. Mathew Thenamkalayil, “The 19th Century Kerala Church and the Leadership of Bl. Chavara,” *Herald of the East* 6 (December 2004): 118.

⁴⁵ Cf. Canisius, 8.

⁴⁶ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 29.

⁴⁷ Cf. Jossy, ed. , *C.M.C in the Shadow of the Most High*, trans. Susan & Seraphia (Aluva: Mount Carmel Generalate, 1997), 6.

⁴⁸ Cf. A. Kanjirathinkal, *A Church in Struggle* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1984), 63.

After the arrival of the European missionaries several western religious Orders came to Kerala and they instituted religious houses in various parts and did apostolic activities. It is in doubt whether they admitted Syro-Malabar candidates into their communities. But it is certain, according to Joseph Kanjiramattathil, that none of them founded a religious society for the Syro-Malabarians or for the indigenous Catholics. He has written that there was no religious institute founded by the Syro-Malabarians existing in the nineteenth century.⁴⁹

3.1.2.2 The First Indigenous Religious Institute (CMI)

The laying of the foundation stone for the first indigenous religious institute for men took place on 11 May 1831 at Mannanam in the presence of the Vicar Apostolic Stabilini and a community of priests and faithful.⁵⁰ Even though the initiative for starting a religious institute came from Father Palackal and from Father Porukara, Chavara also had a big share in it from the very beginning. He had shared his *Malpan*'s views even when he was a student. He himself writes:

All these had been achieved mainly by the efforts and the interest of the two priests- Fr. Porukara and our *Malpan*, Fr. Thoma Palackal. The writer of this, Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara from his youth had been of one mind with the *Malpan*. He had, at the time of his ordination to which he had been led by these two priests, asked God at the first Mass with the Bishop at Arthunkal to bless their efforts and the monastery at Mannanam, which they were trying to establish. Again when I say the high Mass in my Parish Chennankari on the first Sunday of this last Advent (in the year 1829) I prayed for the same intention.⁵¹

About the motive behind in starting the religious life in Kerala Chavara writes in the first page of the *Chronicle* that they desired to start a *darsana vēedu* (House of vision) at least for priests because a lot of good had not been done in Kerala due to the absence of a *tapas bhavan* (house of penance) even for the

⁴⁹ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 30.

⁵⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 33.

⁵¹ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *The Chronicles*, P. J. Thomas, trans. , *Complete Works of Blessed Chavara Vol. I* (Mannanam: The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1990), 22.

priests.⁵² The community life started at Mannanam consisting of prayer, meditation and other spiritual exercise and pastoral work for the good of the people. Chavara's role in the building up of the new religious community became the most important after the death of the other two pioneers- Father Thomas Palackal and Father Thomas Porukara- and the whole responsibility fell on his shoulder.⁵³ He became the superior of this congregation and was called prior and he acted under this title till his death in 1871.⁵⁴

The newly established religious community was known as the Servants of the Immaculate Conception.⁵⁵ Later they were affiliated to the Third Order of the Carmelites Discalced (TOCD)⁵⁶ and now they are known as Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI). By establishing this religious community Chavara expressed his concern for his pastoral and spiritual needs of the people. So the congregation was started not only for the personal sanctification but also for the spiritual welfare of the people and for the service of the Church. They combined in themselves a life of prayer and meditation with a mission to work constantly for the spiritual renewal of the Malabar Church.⁵⁷ With regard to their life and mission Mathew Kaniamparampil writes:

From the very beginning, its members were earnestly engaged in various pastoral activities related to the faith formation of our people. The first spiritual endeavour they initiated was retreat preaching. They visited all the parish Churches, both Syrian and Latin, from south to north of Kerala and preached retreats for the benefit of the faithful. They used to go in groups of three or four priests. They stayed in those parishes for four days. During those days, they used to visit all the families. Wherever there existed any type of disunity, mutual hatred or any spiritual or moral disintegration, these priests would bring them back to the right path. The

⁵² Cf. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Nalagamangal*, C.M.I. Publishing Committee, ed. , *Chavarayachente Sampoornakruthikal Vol. I* (Mannanam: C.M.I Prior General, 1981), 1.

⁵³ Cf. Thenamkalayil, 119.

⁵⁴ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 35.

⁵⁵ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 52.

⁵⁶ Cf. Chavara, *The Chronicles*, 52.

⁵⁷ Cf. Thenamkalayil, 119-120.

preaching of these Fathers as well as their family apostolate brought about a radical renewal in those parishes.⁵⁸

3.1.2.3 Religious Congregation for Women (CMC)

Chavara founded religious congregations in order to make the Church bloom with committed Christians and produce saints. He lamented much by seeing the Kerala Church as barren without any saints.⁵⁹ He writes: “For this Malabar which had received the faith from St. Thomas, the Apostle, remains barren, not having produced even one saint, while other countries and islands which received faith much later have brought forth several saints.”⁶⁰ So he desired to establish a religious congregation for women too so that they also could become committed to Christ and become saints.⁶¹ His vision fulfilled on 13 February 1866, when there established the first indigenous religious congregation for women, Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC), at Koonammavu, in Kerala, with the help of Father Leopold Beccaro OCD.⁶² In 1887 the Kerala Church was divided on the basis of Rites and it affected this Congregation also.⁶³ Thus in 1890 this Congregation also was divided on the basis of Rites and the Latins⁶⁴ came under the diocese of Varapuzha and the Syrians, under the Vicariates of Kottayam and Thrissur as separate groups.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Mathew Kaniamparampil, “Blessed Chavara: A Heroic Model in Spirituality,” *Herald of the East* 6 (July 2004): 18.

⁵⁹ Cf. Cleopatra, “Blessed Chavara’s Vision and Action for the Enlightenment of Women in the 19th Century,” *Herald of the East* 6 (January- July 2003): 55-56.

⁶⁰ Chavara, *The Chronicles*, 146.

⁶¹ Cf. Cleopatra, 56.

⁶² Cf. Ibid. , 57.

⁶³ Cf. Jossy, ed. , *CMC in the Shadow of the Most High*, 79.

⁶⁴ The members of this Congregation came under the Latin diocese of Varapuzha is now known as the Congregation of Teresian Carmelites (CTC). Cf. Jossy, ed. , *CMC in the Shadow of the Most High*, 87-88.

⁶⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 79. Cf. also Benicacia, ed. , *The Chronicles of the Koonammaru Convent Vols. I & II*, Seraphia, trans. (Aluva: C.M.C Publications, 2002), 295-299.

The primary aim of this congregation was pastoral and catechetical. Chavara writes, "...they could, besides living a smooth and peaceful spiritual life, be engaged in the work of teaching young girls prayers, and other virtuous practices, and also handicrafts like needlework etc."⁶⁶ Thus this new congregation was meant to be an effective agent of the uplift, reform and well-being of women⁶⁷ and children, and of building up good Christian families.⁶⁸ He organized the congregation as an axis from where Christian education and culture were to spread among the women of the country. His envision was to make it as enclosure for those women who wanted to devote themselves to a life of prayer, mortification and service of souls.⁶⁹ This is very clear in the words which are written in the *Chronicles*: "This convent was made not to admit saints because the saints will go to heaven. But this convent was made to admit sinners who desire to become saints."⁷⁰

Chavara's vision of religious life was evolved from his vision of the Church. He was convinced that the religious communities can do much in making the life of the faithful spirit-filled and fruitful. He found that, weak faith and lack of charity dimmed the face of the Syro-Malabar Church. Religious are the people to remove the spiritual blindness from the people and implant in them the seeds of holiness. By this he meant that, first of all, they themselves should lead a very holy life, a clean spiritual life.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Benicacia, ed., *The Chronicles of the Koonammavu Convent Vols. I & II*, 23.

⁶⁷ Cf. Jossy, "Blessed Chavara and the Founding of the C.M.C Congregation," *Herald of the East* 6 (December 2004): 15.

⁶⁸ Cf. Sergius, "Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara and the Congregation of Mother of Carmel," *Herald of the East* 2 (January 1993): 95.

⁶⁹ Cf. Valerian, 22.

⁷⁰ Benicacia, ed., *The Chronicles of the Koonammavu Convent Vols. I & II*, 73.

⁷¹ Cf. Jossy, ed., *C.M.C in the Shadow of the Most High*, 41.

3.1.3 Fight against Rokos Schism

Chavara's filial attachment to the Church and his zeal for the well-being of the Syro-Malabar Community are evident in the struggle against schisms affecting the Church of the nineteenth century. He wanted the rightful autonomy of the Syro-Malabar Church. But the same time he was a faithful son of the Church. Chavara proved his ecclesial sense through this struggle, even at the cost of his life.⁷² Under this title we discuss the Rokos schism briefly and Chavara's fights against this schism.

3.1.3.1 Rokos Schism

We have seen about the arrival of Rokos from Babylon in the first chapter. He landed at Cochin on 9 May 1861.⁷³ He was welcomed by Father Antony Thondanatt and his supporters. Father Thondanatt wrote a letter to Chavara requesting him to accept Rokos and also promised Chavara episcopate.⁷⁴ But Chavara answered that his desire was not to be made a bishop, but to save his soul.⁷⁵ Father Thondanatt gained support of many priests as well as many influential people. They produced false letters in order to strengthen the position and to convince the people. The desire of the St. Thomas Christians for a bishop of their own rite and together with these false letters gave acceleration to people to accept Rokos. By the end of October 1861 the major part of the Syro-Malabar Church submitted themselves to his jurisdiction. Out of 155 churches, eighty six churches accepted Rokos fully and thirty partially.⁷⁶

⁷² Cf. Thenamkalayil, 114.

⁷³ Cf. Chavara, *The Chronicles*, 82.

⁷⁴ Cf. Thenamkalayil, 114.

⁷⁵ Cf. Lucas Vithuvattickal, "History of the Rocco Schism," *Herald of the East* 6 (January- July 2003): 73.

⁷⁶ Cf. Thenamkalayil, 115.

3.1.3.2 Chavara Protests against the Schism

From the letters of the delegate Apostolic of Mesopotamia Chavara knew that Rokos was coming against the will of the Holy See. He believed that any one who entered the fold through the back door was not a true pastor, but a thief.⁷⁷ As a request of the then Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly Bernardine Baccinelli Chavara wrote a pastoral letter to the Syro-Malabar churches.⁷⁸ In this letter he writes:

....Hence, my beloved brethren, remember the words of our Lord that he who enters the sheepfold not through the right door is not the true shepherd, but the false one, is a wolf in sheep's clothing; if such shepherds come to you without the decree of the Pope, be cautious not to give ear to their false teachings, nor take sides with them and be prepared even to suffer martyrdom at their hands for being faithful to the true vicar of the Pope, the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly. If you happen to suffer martyrdom at their hands, remember that it will be the greatest grace of God you would receive...⁷⁹

The arrival of Rokos and its sudden occurrence compelled the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly, Bernardine to appoint a Syrian Vicar General for the Malabarians.⁸⁰ Thus Chavara was appointed as the first Vicar General of the Syro-Malabarians on 8 June 1861.⁸¹ As Vicar General, He vigorously and authoritatively worked to establish order and tranquillity in the Church.⁸² Chavara and the colleagues wrote to Pope Pius IX to find out the truth of the matter in order to convince the people of the false claims of Rokos and his supporters. They engaged themselves in resisting the evolution of the schism by preaching and instructing the faithful. When Chavara realized that there is no effect either by the

⁷⁷ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 85-86.

⁷⁸ Cf. Benicacia, "Blessed Chavara: An Apostle of Reconciliation," *Herald of the East I* (July 1991): 24.

⁷⁹ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *The Letters*, Mary Leo, trans. , *Complete Works of Blessed Chavara Vol. IV* (Mannanam: The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1990), 98-99.

⁸⁰Cf. Kanjirathinkal, 31.

⁸¹ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 88.

⁸² Cf. Valerian, 19.

threat of excommunication or by the letter of the Patriarch, he decided to seek the help of the civil authority. The intervention of the civil authority almost put an end to the progress of the schism and according to the letter of the Pope, Vicar Apostolic Baccinelli solemnly excommunicated Rokos on 30 November 1861.⁸³

Under the instructions of the legitimate authority Chavara fought against the schism. It expresses his leadership, filial love, concern and commitment for the Church.⁸⁴ He was a true pastor in the Syro-Malabar Church. He did not hesitate to expose his life itself to danger in his struggle to check the spread of schism and division.⁸⁵ His resistance to the schismatics proved that he was a shepherd after the example of the Good Shepherd, Jesus. His zeal for the salvation of souls, and his concern for the Church were very clearly manifested during this struggle.⁸⁶ Being a good shepherd he took care to protect the flock even from the possible dangers.⁸⁷ Chavara also showed the forgiveness of the Good Shepherd, Jesus, to Father Antony Thondanatt, who was his chief opponent. By doing this he really experienced the great joy in his heart as that of a good shepherd who found his lost sheep. In fact, his fight was not *against* the schismatics but *for* them.⁸⁸ He worked painstakingly to bring back the churches that had joined the schismatics. With the great zeal of a good shepherd he was able to bring back all the separated churches into the Catholic fold.⁸⁹ Thus in order to defend the faith of the Kerala Catholic Church Chavara tried his best in two different areas. He fought against Rokos who came as a false shepherd and he could send back him as a converted person. Also he could convince the people of the truth and bring them

⁸³ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 88-90.

⁸⁴ Cf. Thenamkalayil, 115-116.

⁸⁵ Cf. Benicacia, “Blessed Chavara: An Apostle of Reconciliation,” 27.

⁸⁶ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 93.

⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 94.

⁸⁸ Cf. Ibid. , 100.

⁸⁹ Cf. Benicacia, “Blessed Chavara: An Apostle of Reconciliation,” 27.

back to the Catholic faith and under Holy Pope.⁹⁰ Thus he proved that he was a true pastor in the footsteps of Jesus.

3.2 Liturgical Formation

As a man deeply involved in the Christian formation and spiritual life of his people Chavara realized that the genuine liturgical life could be a remedy for their spiritual sterility. It was his conviction that Christian life begins, grows and reaches its perfection through the liturgical life of the Church.⁹¹ So he turned his task into the realm of liturgical reformation which covered all the aspects of the liturgical life of the people. By the reformation of the Divine Offices, the Order of the Holy Mass, the liturgical calendar etc. he gave more importance to the catechetical formation of the clergy too.

3.2.1 The Divine Office

The book of the Divine Office of the Syro-Malabar Church had different parts: *Hūdra*, *Kaskōl*, *Gāza* and *Kāla*.⁹² It was not easy for them to refer to all these and recite the prayers for each day.⁹³ Especially in the season of Lent, the night prayer (*Leliya*) contained about twenty to twenty five psalms. On Sundays about fifty psalms were to be recited. Night prayer on feast days contained about seventy five psalms. All the 150 psalms were to be recited on the day of Christmas.⁹⁴ Because of its length many priests were neglecting the Divine Office.⁹⁵ Chavara realized the difficulties and after consulting all the *Malpāns* he

⁹⁰ Cf. Thomas Mampra, "Chavarayachan Visvasasamrakshakan," Jose Panthaplathottiyil, ed., *Chavarayachan* (Kottayam: Deepika Publication, 2004), 106.

⁹¹ Cf. Panthaplackal, 13.

⁹² These are the Syriac words denoting certain parts of the Divine Office of the Syro-Malabarians as well as that of the Chaldeans. Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 47.

⁹³ Cf. Valerian, 26.

⁹⁴ Cf. Jacob Mangatt, "Blessed Chavara A True Pastor in the Footsteps of Jesus," *Herald of the East* 6 (December 2004): 75.

⁹⁵ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 48.

made a thorough renewal of the book of the Divine Office. He reduced the whole matter to two volumes, one for ordinary days and other for Sundays and feast days. Without in any way changing its structure, he reduced its length and made it handy for the priests.⁹⁶

3.2.2 The Divine Office for the Dead

Chavara prepared also an Office for the dead- a long one and a short one. Besides, he made the Office for the funeral- different for the adults, lay persons, the children and for the priests. This was not printed in Chavara's life time. Afterwards, several editions of this were made and were in use in the Syro-Malabar Church till the new edition in Malayalam was made in 1967.⁹⁷

3.2.3 The Small Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Chavara was a great devotee of the Blessed Virgin Mary too. So he tried to propagate this Marian devotion in the Syro-Malabar Church. The Small Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a result of this effort. He translated it from the Roman ritual into Syriac. But he adapted it to the structure of the Divine Office of the Malabarians. Certain special prayers to St. Joseph also he added at the end of each part of the Office.⁹⁸

3.2.4 Liturgy of the Holy Saturday

At the time of Chavara there was no special liturgical ceremony on Holy Saturday in the Syro-Malabar Church. To remove this defect, Chavara, translated the entire liturgy of the Holy Saturday of the Roman ritual into Syriac under the direction of the Vicar Apostolic.⁹⁹ In a letter to the Cardinal Prefect of the

⁹⁶ Cf. Mangatt, 75.

⁹⁷ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 49.

⁹⁸ Cf. Ibid.

⁹⁹ Cf. Ibid. , 49-50.

Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* he writes: “We are sending along with this letter the liturgy of the Holy Saturday, translated from the Latin ritual, for your approval. In the Syrian rite there is no special liturgical service for Holy Saturday. Our churches remain closed on that day like the Jewish synagogues.”¹⁰⁰ The Vicar Apostolic submitted this to the Holy See for approval in 1865. It got permission in 1870, but was printed only in 1922.¹⁰¹

3.2.5 Ritual Blessings

The prayers of various blessings such as the blessing of water, new house etc. also were translated into Syriac by Chavara. But the book was printed only after his death and in the following years new prayers were added.¹⁰²

3.2.6 The Order of the Holy Mass or *Thūkāsa*

There was no uniformity in celebrating the Eucharist. Chavara felt that uniformity of practice in the various parishes would foster solidarity and unity in the Church.¹⁰³ So he prepared a book containing the rubrics of the Mass in detail, and published it with due permissions¹⁰⁴ under the title *Thūkāsa* (Order).¹⁰⁵ Thus he could bring about uniformity in the celebration of the sacred liturgy in the Syrian Rite.

3.2.7 Liturgical Calendar

The Syro-Malabarians had no liturgical calendar except the one in the Missal. So there existed certain confusions in practice, especially concerning the

¹⁰⁰ Chavara, *The Letters*, 11.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 50.

¹⁰² Cf. Ibid.

¹⁰³ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 72.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Canisius, 22.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 50.

feasts which depended on the Easter. To solve this confusion Chavara prepared a liturgical calendar, which included all feasts and other prescriptions concerning the colour of the vestments and the like. It was printed in 1866 according to the order of the Vicar Apostolic. Thereafter, every year, till his death, Chavara himself was preparing the calendar and giving it for printing.¹⁰⁶

The constitution on Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council says: "It is through the liturgy, especially that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."¹⁰⁷ So Chavara made much effort in the field of liturgy. He was motivated by his pastoral zeal for the spiritual renewal of the priests as well as that of the faithful and the glory of God.¹⁰⁸

3.3 In the Realm of Spiritual Renewal

We have seen that Chavara was a man who lived with a vision to bring in a spiritual renewal for the whole of the Syro-Malabar Church. At a time when Malabar Church was lacking in spiritual leaders and learned priests, he initiated a good approach for the spiritual renewal of the faithful, which had lasting effects in the Malabar Church. His programmes were aimed at two levels- the renewal of the priests and spiritual nourishment of the people.¹⁰⁹ That is, through this spiritual renewal he aimed for the catechetical formation of both clergy and laity. With this purpose he organised annual retreats for priests and the lay people, gave initiation for Sunday sermons, forty hours adoration, catechesis, other devotional practices etc.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 51.

¹⁰⁷ Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Austin Flannery, ed. , *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Mumbai: St. Paul Publications, 2004), no. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Ibid. , 52.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. M.L James, "Blessed Chavara: A Great Man Who Walked Ahead of His Times," *Herald of the East* 6 (December 2004): 129.

3.3.1 Annual Retreats for Priests

Chavara foresaw that the future of the Church depended on shepherds who were disciplined and trained sufficiently at the intellectual, spiritual and cultural levels. With a vision of that he instituted two public seminaries at Mannanam and Puthenpally.¹¹⁰ He was convinced of the principle *Qualis Sacerdos, talis populus.*¹¹¹ That is to say, he believed that the quality of the people depended on the quality of the priests. They are the shepherds and on them depended the well being, the safety, and the salvation of the flock. If striking the shepherd was enough to scatter the flock, strengthening the qualities of the shepherd makes sure the well being of the flock. So he gave great attention to the spiritual renewal of the priests and for this he instituted the annual retreats for them. He also insisted that the priests should recite the Divine Office. He did all these with the support and blessings of the Archbishop.¹¹² He was conscious of the importance of good priests in the life of the Christian community. So he made all possible efforts to form good committed priests.¹¹³

3.3.2 Sunday Sermons

It was Chavara who introduced the practice of preaching a sermon during Mass every Sunday.¹¹⁴ He insisted that after the Gospel reading or after the Mass a sermon should be preached on Sundays. Punishment also was given to those who were not practising this.¹¹⁵ He was convinced that the priest is primarily the messenger of the Gospel. He is called to take the place of Christ in the

¹¹⁰ Cf. Mangatt, 73.

¹¹¹ Cf. Panthaplackal, 17.

¹¹² Cf. Valerian, 25.

¹¹³ Cf. Thenamkalayil, 117.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 74.

¹¹⁵ Cf. John Romeo, *Vazhthapetta Chavarayachan Vyakthiyum Veedshanavum Vol. II* (Alwaye: Chavara Books & Publications, 1989), 34.

transmission of His Good News as Liberator and Saviour.¹¹⁶ Almost all the churches in Kerala were filled with Chavara's inspiring, striking and compassionate preaching. It is said that when he goes to the lectern he will roar like a lion- not only like a lion roaring against the injustices of the world but also a strong promoter of social action and moral living. He could move even the most stone-hearted people by his sermons during Mass.¹¹⁷

3.3.3 Retreats for Laity

Chavara also tried to make popular the idea of retreats for the laity.¹¹⁸ This idea was very much common in the European Churches. They usually conducted it in the line of missions. Mission in the West meant a short period of time for a spiritual awakening in which a group of priests would preach spiritual retreats for a few successive days staying at a particular place. For the spiritual renewal of the laity Chavara initiated this kind of public retreat preaching in the Syro-Malabar Church.¹¹⁹ It was in the parish at Pulinkunnu he made his first retreat preaching and the parishioners were seemed very happy to produce fruits by receiving the seeds of the Word of God preached by him.¹²⁰ It is doubtful whether there a single church in Kerala where Chavara had not preached a retreat.¹²¹

3.3.4 Forty Hours Adoration

It was Chavara who instituted the Forty Hours Adoration in Kerala,¹²² in 1866.¹²³ He was a great devotee of the Blessed Sacrament. He was convinced

¹¹⁶ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 41.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 74.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Valerian, 25.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Mangatt, 73.

¹²⁰ Cf. Canisius, *Vazhthapetta Chavara: Kerala Sabha Samudharakan Vol. II* (Kochi: The CMI General Department for the Media of Communications, 1990), 14.

¹²¹ Cf. Mangatt, 73.

¹²² Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 73.

that the faith in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist should be the basis of Christian life and so he introduced Forty Hours Adoration in the Syro-Malabar Church. He meant it for the spiritual growth of the people. Through this he also intended to keep the unity of the Church.¹²⁴ For this purpose he translated from the Latin Rite the ceremonies of Forty Hours Adoration. He also translated its norms and laws into Malayalam from the decrees of Pontiffs. This devotion was first conducted in St. Philomina church at Koonammavu monastery in 1866 and at Mannanam and Vazhakulam monasteries in 1867 and at Elthuruth monastery in 1868. Then it extended to the other churches of Kerala and it has helped much to renew the Christian life in this region.¹²⁵

3.3.5 Catechesis and Other Devotional Practices

Chavara made the arrangements to bring the Word of God to the children through catechesis.¹²⁶ He opened catechumenates attached to each house of his institute, where non-Christians belonging to the backward classes were baptised.¹²⁷ He started two schools- one at Mannanam and other at Arpookara-exclusively for teaching catechism to the new converts from the low caste,¹²⁸ both for the children and the adults. Some of the priests of his Congregation were appointed to supervise the religious instruction and the good conduct of the children in several parishes under the instructions of the Vicar Apostolic Beccinelli. In 1853, he started the first formation centre at Mannanam.¹²⁹

¹²³ Cf. Valerian, 28.

¹²⁴ Cf. Panthaplackal, 15.

¹²⁵ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 51.

¹²⁶ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 43.

¹²⁷ Cf. Canisius, 21.

¹²⁸ Cf. Chacko, 72.

¹²⁹ Cf. James, 129.

Besides these he also started devotions like ‘first Friday devotion,’ and ‘Way of the Cross’,¹³⁰ and those still remains vital in the spiritual life of the Syro-Malabar Church. Thus under the leadership of Chavara the members of his congregation as well as other priests proclaimed the Word of God in different means and it was the reawakening of the Christian life in the Syro-Malabar Church. It brought about tremendous spiritual growth and renewal¹³¹ in their own life situations.

3.3.6 Marian Devotion

Chavara played a significant role in nurturing and promoting Marian devotion in the Kerala Church.¹³² In order to establish effectively this devotion he started many movements like ‘the Confraternity of the Scapular,’ ‘the Confraternity of the Rosary,’ ‘the Confraternity of Mary Immaculate,’ and ‘the Confraternity of Our Lady of Sorrows.’ He used to conduct discourses on 8 September, the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the church of Vechoor.¹³³ It was his attempt that made the devotion to the Rosary to the families.¹³⁴ He insisted the parents to train their children in the various forms of devotion. He insisted also to train them for attending Mass, especially on Saturdays, in honour of Our Lady Dolours. It was his initiative that novenas and prayers in connection with important feasts of Our Lady and the month of May devotion should be observed in the families of the Kerala Church.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Cf. Mangatt, 75.

¹³¹ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 74.

¹³² Cf. Ancella, “Mother Mary in the Spirituality of Blessed Chavara,” *Herald of the East* 6 (December 2004): 142.

¹³³ Cf. Ibid. , 143.

¹³⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 141.

¹³⁵ Cf. Ancella, 143.

3.4 Contributions in Education

Chavara realized the importance of education for the proclamation of the Good News. He was a great educationist. Till his time, the Church in Kerala had not developed much in the field of education. The protestant missionaries had already started running a few English schools from about 1816.¹³⁶ But the Catholics were prohibited to attend these schools. They were almost forbidden to study English.¹³⁷ In this situation Chavara realized that “the community would ever remain downtrodden if they did not move with the times”¹³⁸ and so he decided to concentrate on educational work.

3.4.1 Schools in Kerala

Chavara desired to retire from the secular field in order to make the secular field become the Kingdom of God. All his attempts at educating and reforming the people of the world were motivated by the desire that they should become people of God.¹³⁹ With this intention in 1846¹⁴⁰ he started the first Catholic Sanskrit School in Kerala.¹⁴¹ Starting Sanskrit school by the Catholics was something people could not even imagine at that time. But he not only started the school but also instructed that every church should send two students each for studying there. He also insisted that there should not be any sort of caste discrimination in the schools run by the church.¹⁴² Later in 1864 he started the

¹³⁶ Cf. Valerian, 15.

¹³⁷ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 74.

¹³⁸ Cf. Valerian, 15.

¹³⁹ Cf. Chacko, 61.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Valerian, 15.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Mathew Chalil, “Chavara’s Vision on Education,” in Paul Kalluveettil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds. , *The Lord of Heaven & Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, C.M.I* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 170.

¹⁴² Cf. James, 130.

first Catholic Primary school in Mannanam.¹⁴³ He wanted to start a college under the management of the Syrian Church, but it could not be realized because of the unfavourable attitudes of the foreign missionaries.¹⁴⁴

3.4.2 The Idea of ‘a School for a Church’

Chavara, a man of great vision, a man beyond the times could foresee the future of the people of God in the Church of Kerala. At that time the public schools were considered rather a luxury and education was not considered by the public a felt need. Besides, there were no public schools at all for Catholics in Kerala.¹⁴⁵ In this situation, Chavara, as Vicar General of the Syrians, took a very bold step. He issued a mandate, calling upon all parish churches under his jurisdiction to raise schools¹⁴⁶ attached to each of them. If today the Catholics of Kerala are literate to a high degree, it is largely because of the farsighted policy of Chavara, in the establishment of a school for each parish.¹⁴⁷

Chavara understood that only through education the injustice and inequality of the society could be removed. So he gave equal importance to both general education and religious education.¹⁴⁸ He says:

Just as without eyes one cannot see the material things of the world, so also without knowledge it will be impossible for us to see or understand the reality of the world that is above and the Lord that dwells therein. As those who have no eyes are called “blind,” so too those who have no learning should be called “spiritually blind.” Consequently, although we the Nazarenes claim to be Christians of ancient origin, we do not have the

¹⁴³ Cf. Chalil, 170.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 76.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Lucas Vithuvattikal, “Blessed Chavara the Un-Questioned Leader,” *Herald of the East* 6 (January- July 2003): 10.

¹⁴⁶ These Schools attached to the churches are known as *Pallikkōōdams*. *Palli* means church. The concept of *Pallikkōōdam* came into exist in this way. Cf. Z.M. Moozhoor, *Aroopiyude Meloppulla Manushyan* (Trivandrum: Carmel Publishing Centre, 2003), 191.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Valerian, 16.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Cleopatra, *A Handbook for C.M.C. Teachers* (Aluva: CMC Publications, 2003), 35.

vitality nor the wisdom of the sages because of this spiritual blindness. Our Lord himself has taught that if the blind leads the blind both will fall into the pit.¹⁴⁹

3.4.3 Mid-day Meal in Schools

Considering the social situations of his times Chavara really took bold steps for raising the living standards of *dalits*, educating them and eradicating the caste system. He considered them ‘God’s own children’ and vigorously worked for their upliftment. For their education he not only started a school but also arranged their mid-day meal from the monastery.¹⁵⁰ He developed a small group of dedicated Christians to collect alms and other contributions from the parish churches. He then made arrangements for the free distribution of food, clothing, books, pencils etc. to the students and others in need.¹⁵¹ Many of the Indian States started the programme of mid-day meal only towards the end of the twentieth century. But Chavara successfully put it into practice more than 150 years ago.¹⁵² Through satisfying the fundamental needs of the poor, through focussing on their integral development he could sow the seeds of Good News into their hearts.

3.4.4 Boarding for Girls

In order to give education and Christian formation to the girls Chavara started a boarding (*Edukkumdāt*) attached to the first religious convent at Koonammavu. He aimed that the training for girls to be good, holy and educated. They were taught languages- Malayalam, Tamil, English and Latin; crafts like rosary-making, flower-making; sewing, knitting and cooking; music, Mathematics, needlework and catechism. In other words, attention was given to the intellectual, mental, social and spiritual development of the girls. They were

¹⁴⁹ Chavara, *The Letters*, 95.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. James, 129-130.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 77.

¹⁵² Cf. James, 130.

disciplined and taught to pray and practise virtues like humility, obedience, piety etc. Of these girls most of them joined the convent and became religious sisters. Others went home, married and became good housewives and mothers and brought up children in a good family background.¹⁵³

3.5 Communication and Media

The most far-reaching, enduring, all-embracing, illuminating, edifying and even sanctifying field of activity initiated by Chavara was that of printing.¹⁵⁴ Among the means of social communication, press is a very powerful force. The Second Vatican Council says: “If one really wants to form readers in truly Christian spirit, an authentically Catholic press ought to be established and supported.”¹⁵⁵ Chavara was a pastor who really wanted to form the faithful in true Christian spirit. So in spite of much difficulty he desired greatly to establish a printing press.¹⁵⁶

3.5.1 The First Press in the Syro-Malabar Church

The only mass media available at Chavara’s time was print medium. For the powerful communication of Christian values he thought it essential that the Catholics should have a press. But he had not even seen a press.¹⁵⁷ During those years, there were only two printing presses in Kerala, one in Kottayam owned by protestant missionaries and the other a Government press in Trivandrum. He went to Kottayam in order to have an idea of the press, but was totally denied to enter there. However, he did not abandon his effort. He went to Trivandrum and

¹⁵³ Cf. Cleopatra, “Blessed Chavara’s Vision and Action for the Enlightenment of Women in the 19th Century,” 59.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Chacko, 65.

¹⁵⁵ Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica*, Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Mumbai: St. Paul Publications, 2004), no. 14.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 77.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. James, 131.

received permission to see the press. Keeping its image in his mind, he went back to Mannanam.¹⁵⁸ He made a model of the printing press with plantain shaft and with the help of a carpenter and ironsmith, made one and started the printing press at Mannanam in 1846.¹⁵⁹ It is from this press that later in the year 1887, the *Deepika* (*Nazrāni Deepika*), the first Malayalam daily Newspaper started publishing.¹⁶⁰ The original wooden press “is preserved to this day, as a precious relic attributed to his skill, foresight, perseverance and patience.”¹⁶¹

3.5.2 The Publication Centre

By establishing the printing press Chavara opened the first Catholic publishing house at Mannanam. Thus St. Joseph’s press Mannanam became the cradle of the Catholic publications in Kerala.¹⁶² The first two books published from this printing press were *Jnānapīyūsham* (The Spiritual Nectar) and *Divya Māthraka* (The Divine Model). The author of *The Divine Model* was Chavara himself. Afterwards he published his *Jnānaprajāgaram* (The Vigil of Wisdom), *Grahasta Dharmōdyānam* (A Garden of Family Moral Codes) and *Jnāna-navaratnam* (Nine Jewels of Knowledge).¹⁶³ Books like *Jnānapīyūsham*, *Perpetual Adoration, and The Words of a Dying Father* were of great inspiration to the people in their spiritual life. This caused the adults to grow in piety and helped the children in their spiritual formation. The result of this was a boom in priestly and

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Kaniamparampil, “Blessed Chavara and His Unique Contributions to the Church in India,” 5.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Vithuvattickal, “Blessed Chavara the Un-Questioned Leader,” 11.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Kaniamparampil, “Blessed Chavara and His Unique Contributions to the Church in India,” 5.

¹⁶¹ Valerian Plathottam, *Bharath Apostle Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara* (Palai: St. Thomas Press, 1991), 25-26.

¹⁶² Cf. James, 131.

¹⁶³ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 74.

religious vocations. People came to be devoted to the mystery of Christ, the Blessed Mother and the Holy Family.¹⁶⁴

In the time of Chavara many devotional books (not only his own books but other books also) were published from Mannanam and the copies of these books were printed and circulated among the people. Most of them are still used as popular books of devotion.¹⁶⁵ Thus by his words and deeds Chavara tried to lead the flock of Christ through the right path and to nourish them with the spiritual food. The establishment of press and schools were two outstanding examples of his profound pastoral foresight. Through these he tried to achieve the cultural and spiritual progress of his community.¹⁶⁶

3.6 Contributions in the Social Level

Chavara's zeal for the salvation of souls was not limited to the flock within the fold but beyond it. We have seen that he started a school for the outcastes and the catechumens, in 1864 at Mannanam. He viewed people from a supernatural point of view and considered them children of God.¹⁶⁷ John 13: 1 says, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." Chavara also followed the example of his Master. According to him people of God refers to all those who are loved by God. All are God's children and God hates no one. He created them in His own image and likeness. This image- the image of love- has to come out of every person and to grow into its perfection. That was Chavara's social vision¹⁶⁸ and he spent his life for that. He showed his special love and concern for the poor and the outcaste members of his flock. He proved his love

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Cleopatra, "Blessed Chavara's Vision and Action for the Enlightenment of Women in the 19th Century," 54.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 75.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 80.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 53.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Sergius, "Chavarayachan Samoohaparishkarthavu," Z. M. Moozhoor, ed. , *Chavarayachan Vividha Veekshanangalil* (Thevara: Janatha Services, 1989), 95-96.

for God authentically by his love for his brethren especially for the poor¹⁶⁹ and the sick.

3.6.1 Confraternity of St. Joseph

This is a pious association which Chavara started with two purposes: to help others to die a good death and to help the poor. In 1843 Chavara began to give food and clothes to the poor who came for the feast of St. Joseph on 19 March at Mannanam. To meet the expense for this he started the Confraternity of St. Joseph for Happy Death.¹⁷⁰ He wanted that the members of the Confraternity regularly visit the sick and dying in the houses and prepare them for a happy death. Later he started another Confraternity in Kainakary.¹⁷¹ In his letter to the parishioners of Kainakary, he gives more precise norms regarding the duties of the members:

Every member should go alone or in company with others to the sick person who is reported to be nearing his or her last and see that the last sacraments are administered to him or her, and designate persons to nurse him or her by taking turns and set a time-table for them to change their duty time. The infirmarian and his helpers will be responsible for this and all the members are bound to obey him. This act of mercy is the primary duty of the members. If only one soul is saved through the counselling and service of another and goes to heaven, he the helper, would be saved invariably, because the soul thus saved would be near him with a heart filled gratitude and would pray unceasingly for the salvation of the soul that saved him.¹⁷²

Chavara also advised the members to adapt a poor family in the neighbourhood and to provide them with food and clothes on the feast day of St. Joseph.¹⁷³ Following the example of Chavara, several Catholic families of Kerala

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Ibid. , 56.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 55-56.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Panthaplackal, 30.

¹⁷² Chavara, *The Letters*, 123.

¹⁷³ Cf. Thomas Felix, “Dedicated to the Cause of the Sick and the Poor,” in Paul Kalluveettil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds. , *The Lord of Heaven & Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, C.M.I* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 165.

even now do this act of charity. This Confraternity also helped to propagate the devotion to St. Joseph in a practical manner.¹⁷⁴

3.6.2 Home of Charity

Chavara's love for the poor assumed more concrete forms in various ways. The home of charity in his parish is a memorial of his love for the poor and the destitute. He wished it to be established by his own parishioners.¹⁷⁵ So he writes:

Now my intense desire and my earnest request to you, is to begin such a confraternity which has taken origin from such a motivation. Though I may not have the good fortune to witness the beginning of such an institute, if you so desire, you can get it realized. Keep a charity box with the label "Happy death charity box" and without being ashamed of it, beg of others and raise a fund yourselves and build a model charity home near the small chapel of yours and let, at least one or two sick people who have no one to take care of, stay in the house and thus try to cultivate at least a shadow of this virtue. This will help the act of mercy to grow in Malabar.¹⁷⁶

According to the instruction of Chavara the house was founded on 12 December 1869 and it continues till today. Chavara hoped, it became the first house of charity in Kerala.¹⁷⁷ He writes:

Close to your chapel construct a house however small it be, with a hall and a room on both sides and a veranda. Construct a roof with bamboos and have it named 'Home of Charity.' Let the poor and the destitute who have no one to take care of be taken here, as also women or beggars in the street who are sick. Help them stay here peacefully and this will be the first home of charity in Malabar.¹⁷⁸

Thus this institute became the first of this kind not only in Kerala but also in India¹⁷⁹ and it "became the beacon or torch from which others lighted their

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 56.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 55.

¹⁷⁶ Chavara, *The Letters*, 126.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 55.

¹⁷⁸ Chavara, *The Letters*, 126.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Panthaplackal, 31.

candles and so we have at present thousands of poor homes, houses of charity, orphanages, houses for the destitute and dying all through the country.”¹⁸⁰

3.6.3 *Pidiyari* (A handful of rice)

In order to meet the expenses to help the poor, Chavara introduced a system of collection known as *Pidiyari*. Every time when rice was measured out for cooking, Catholic families were advised to take out a hand- full (*pidi*) from the measured pot and keep it in a special vessel labelled to *Infant Jesus*. This was collected by the deputies at the end of the week or month.¹⁸¹ It may be surprising to know that some monasteries built at that time also financed from these money collected from *pidiyari*.¹⁸² By introducing this system Chavara made it sure that the good works should not be stopped due to lack of money.¹⁸³

3.6.4 Religious Harmony and Religious Tolerance

Though Chavara worked intensely for the growth of the Catholic community he never neglected the people of other Religions. He made a point to live in harmony and friendship with them. He never did anything that troubled the communal harmony anywhere he went nor allowed anyone else from his fraternity to do so. This is evident from the incident that happened when the first fathers wanted to start the first monastery. They wanted to start it at Pullarikunnu, but shifted to Mannanam due to some opposition from some Hindus.¹⁸⁴ The Hindus opposed because that was the dwelling place of *Kumaranalloor Bhagavathi*.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ J. Chirayil, “Fr. Chavara the Pioneer of Kerala Renaissance,” *Herald of the East* I (October 1991): 52.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Felix, 166.

¹⁸² Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 53.

¹⁸³ Cf. James, 130.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Thenamkalayil, 118.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Bernard, *C.M.I Sabha Adyadashakangalil* (Cochin: The CMI General Department for the Media of Communication, 1989), 9.

Chavara writes in the *Chronicles*: "...they wanted no trouble and would rather be content with a less convenient place."¹⁸⁶ Chavara never complained or fought with them. But he desired to build up charity and fellowship in the human hearts than to build a monastery with stone and wood.¹⁸⁷ He was a very devoted and committed believer in the Indian heritage of religious harmony and tolerance.¹⁸⁸ Thus through promoting religious harmony too he was establishing the Kingdom of God.

3.6.5 Empowerment of Women

At the time of Chavara, among the Syrian Christians women were denied equality with men. They had no share of the family property. They were married off at an early age and were supposed to do the duties at home, be a good wife and mother. Even in the church they had a very low image.¹⁸⁹ It is in this situation Chavara came with a very high and impressive vision of woman.¹⁹⁰ It was he, the first among the Christians of India, who realized the need of empowering women for the social up-lift of the families and for the committed service of the Church. This vision he had on women was a new, revolutionary and far ahead of his times.¹⁹¹

Chavara had experienced the potentialities of women first through his own mother.¹⁹² In his vision, it is the woman who acts as the instrument of peace in a

¹⁸⁶ Chavara, *The Chronicles*, 13.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Z.M. Moozhoor, *Aroopiyude Meloppulla Manushyan* (Trivandrum: Carmel Publishing Centre, 2003), 87.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Thenamkalayil, 118.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Cleopatra, "Blessed Chavara's Vision and Action for the Enlightenment of Women in the 19th Century," 41.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 42.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Panthaplackal, 27.

¹⁹² Cf. Cleopatra, "Blessed Chavara's Vision and Action for the Enlightenment of Women in the 19th Century," 43.

family. A woman, who filled with love, cannot but give love and unite everyone in love.¹⁹³ His expectations about women had become the felt need in his time. He was influenced by this need of educating the women of Kerala for the spiritual formation of the families and society. Thus undergoing very many crises and difficulties, he finally succeeded in starting a religious house for women at Koonammavu in 1866.¹⁹⁴ For him, religious community life for women is, first of all, for the self sanctification, then to give education for value formation and thirdly to empower the women for social action. Thus with a revolutionary vision, far ahead of his time, Chavara took the step to liberate and empower the women in order to renew and strengthen the Church and society.¹⁹⁵

3.6.6 Renewal of Christian Families

In his apostolate and in his writings Chavara paid special attention to building up the family which constitutes the basic unit of all society.¹⁹⁶ He knew that social progress is impossible without improvement in the family. So he had an ardent desire for the spiritual, social and financial development of the family. As an aid to the spiritual growth, Chavara recommended devotion to the Holy Family.¹⁹⁷ According to him the Christian family is a reflection of heaven on earth.¹⁹⁸ So his fundamental vision about the family was to make every family an earthly replica of the heavenly kingdom.¹⁹⁹ With the intention of spiritual renewal and cultural development Chavara wrote a letter to the people of Kainakary on

¹⁹³ Cf. Ibid. , 46.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Panthaplackal, 27.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 28.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Thomas Kadankavil, “Vision of Blessed Chavara on Christian Family,” trans. Jose Thadavanal, *Herald of the East* 3 (April 1994): 114.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 115.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. George Kaniarakath, “Chavara’s Vision of a Christian Family: According to His Epistle to the Community at Kainakary,” *Herald of the East* 1 (July 1991): 20.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Kadankavil, 116.

February 1868, known as *Directives for Families (Kudumbachattam)*.²⁰⁰ This is called the ‘Magna Carta’ of the Christian family life and is known as Chavara’s *Chavarul*.²⁰¹ Its contents have a lasting value. Bishop Lawrence Mukkuzhy writes:

Blessed Chavara’s “Chavarul” is very helpful. We should see to it that every house has a copy of the book. Today all dioceses have marriage guidance courses in preparation for marriage. It would be very good if Blessed Chavara’s “Chavarul” or “Family Rule” can be included in the syllabus of marriage guidance courses. The ideas contained in it are of lasting value. The couples can be given these as a rule of life.²⁰²

Thus if it has relevance even today, it could surely help the families of his time to build up a solid Christian foundation. It was mainly Chavara and the members of his congregation who took the leadership for the family apostolate in Kerala in the nineteenth century.

3.7 Chavara and His Writings

Chavara tried to renew the St. Thomas Christian Community not only by his sermons, retreats and other services but also through several of his writings.²⁰³ He entered into the literary activity only towards the end of his life, i.e., only after the condition of the Malabar Church became almost calm.²⁰⁴ He wrote from an inner, spiritual urge to build up the Syro-Malabar Church in general and his spiritual children in particular. He wrote because:

He wanted to leave to posterity an accurate account of what he saw and heard in those critical years, to give a description of his spiritual-mystical journey, to seek guidance from his ecclesiastical superiors, to give

²⁰⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 117.

²⁰¹ Cf. Domician Manikkathan, *Kerala Sabhadeepam(A Study on Fr. Chavara)* (Cochin: K.C.M. Press, 1984), 98.

²⁰² Lawrence Mukkuzhy, “Blessed Kuriakose Chavara A Loving Father of Families,” *Herald of the East* 6 (July 2004): 13-14.

²⁰³ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 66.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 64.

guidance to his spiritual children and to reform and renew the liturgy of his Church.²⁰⁵

Chavara had a very developed sense of history and his *Chronicles* are a treasure for historians of Kerala, both secular and ecclesiastical. It is an authoritative historical record of the events that unfolded in the Church in Kerala.²⁰⁶ By his *Chronicles* he not only set a model for the monasteries and convents that he founded, but also inspired his contemporaries and succeeding generations to record the events documents.²⁰⁷ Besides *Chronicles*, Chavara's writings include Letters, Liturgical Books, Administrative writings, Spiritual books etc.²⁰⁸ Practically none of his writings, except liturgical writings, were printed during his life. After his death the *Testament* that he wrote to his parishioners turned to be the most popular of his writings. That was printed sixteen times before the definitive edition in 1981 and of which 150 thousand copies had been in circulation.²⁰⁹ He wished that all his spiritual children should become persons of prayer. With this intention also he wrote the books where he shared his own prayer experiences.²¹⁰ Besides all these "through his writings he aimed to bring Christ to people more than to bring people to Christianity."²¹¹ The prophetic qualities- like close intimacy with God, sense of history and total involvement in

²⁰⁵ Sebastian Poonoly, "Writings of Chavara," in Paul Kalluveettil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds., *The Lord of Heaven & Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, C.M.I* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 116.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 118.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 119.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 64.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Poonoly, 117.

²¹⁰ Cf. Canisius, *Vazhthapetta Chavara:Kerala Sabha Samudharakan Vol. I* (Kochi: The CMI General Department for the Media of Communication, 1990), 15.

²¹¹ C. P. Sreedharan, "Atmaunnathyam Churathiya Kavithaganga," *Chavara Sadabhi 1871- 1971*, 61-66 quoted in Thomas Panthaplackal, *Chavarayachan Oru Rekhachithram* (Ernakulam: The CMI General Secretariate for Evangelization & Pastoral Ministry, 2004), 124.

the destiny of the people²¹²- which are evident in his writings, clearly presents him as a prophet of his time. In 1981-1982, a four volume definitive edition of the writings of Chavara, except liturgical books, appeared in print in the original Malayalam. Similarly, in 1989-1990 an English translation of the same also was out.²¹³ Thus it made possible to transfer the lasting value of his messages to the ages.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter we were trying to see the important contributions of Chavara in the field of faith formation especially in the Syro-Malabar Church. He was a convinced person and could set the believers of his community “an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4: 12) and in many other virtues. As a pastor he realized that to teach the people of God in faith is his first and foremost duty. Because St. Paul says, “for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:16). Chavara was a man of prayer and an experienced person of God’s unconditional love in his own life. So he could easily convey God’s message of love- the Good News- to his community. His life itself was a witness to them. He played his role as a catechetical educator in all the possible areas of the life situations of the people of God without any discrimination of caste and religion. As a catechetical educator he extends his hands to all the possible fields of the Church. Through all these he could give a catechetical formation to both clergy and laity. In the hands of God he made himself an obedient instrument with which the Master can play at any time, at any place and in any way He likes. Thus Chavara’s life and his messages- through words and deeds- caused a fundamental growth in the Syro-Malabar Church.

It is certain that the catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church is obliged to Chavara for many of his catechetical contributions. The Syro-Malabar Church today has a systematic and well organized catechesis. It has a gradual

²¹² Joseph Pathrapankal, “Chavara, A Prophet of Our Times,” *Journal of Dharma* 15 (January- March 1990): 73-76.

²¹³ Poonoly, 117.

development in different catechetical fields from the beginning. So our next chapter mainly focus on the historical development of catechesis and its salient features in the Syro-Malabar Church.

CHAPTER THREE

CATECHESIS IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

1. Introduction

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* says that catechesis is one of the primary tasks of the Church.¹ It “is a responsibility of the entire Christian community.”² As Pope Paul VI says in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* catechesis occupies an important place in evangelization,³ which “is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.”⁴ In the last chapter we have seen how Chavara, as a faithful member of the Syro-Malabar Church promote Christian faith formation through his words and deeds. Catechesis includes integral formation of the human person. In order to get a clear idea about catechesis we will discuss more about it in this chapter. Our discussion starts with catechesis in general, its aim, tasks etc. It is followed by a brief discussion on catechesis in the Universal Church and catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church in particular. We conclude this chapter by discussing the salient features of catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church.

2. Defining Catechesis

The word *catechise* is derived from the Greek word *Katechein*,⁵ which means, ‘to echo,’ or ‘to sound from above.’⁶ Etymologically it implies an oral instruction.

¹ Cf. *CT* 1.

² Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2003), no. 220.

³ Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Boston: Pauline Book & Media, 1975), no. 22.

⁴ *Ibid.* , no. 14.

⁵ Cf. F. X. Murphy, “Catechesis, I (Early Christian),” Berard L. Marthaler, ed. , *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second ed. (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 227.

But in the course of time this word was used to designate the teaching given by the Church and this teaching is called catechesis.⁷ “Within the scope of pastoral activity, catechesis is the term to be used for that form of ecclesial action which leads both communities and individual members of the faithful to maturity of faith.”⁸ In the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* Pope John Paul II defines catechesis as “an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.”⁹ Xavier Kochuparambil in his article *Sabhatmakamaya Mathabodhanam*, says, “Catechesis is the faith formation given by the Church for all those who received Baptism in view of their growth in faith and maturity in Christ.”¹⁰ Catechesis is faith formation. It is a formation to live by confessing Jesus as Lord and God.¹¹ It is a process to connect faith to life.¹² So catechesis is one of the most important actions of the Church.

⁶ Cf. M.C. Bryce, “Catechesis,” Iris V. Cully and Kendig Brubaker Cully, eds. , *Harper’s Encyclopedia of Religious Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990), 98.

⁷ Cf. Gilbert Choondal, “Catechesis: Naming an Evolving Process,” Gilbert Choondal, ed. , *Introducing the General Directory for Catechesis* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2004), 9. Cf. also Carter E. G. , *The Modern Challenge to Religious Education* (New York: William H. Sadlier, 1961), 33.

⁸ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 1971, no.21.

⁹ CT 18.

¹⁰ Xavier Kochuparambil, “Sabhatmakamaya Mathabodhanam,” *Kathioli* 27 (April 1988): 12.

¹¹ Cf. Joseph Malepparambil, “Aradhanakramadhishtitha Mathabodhanam,” *Dukrana* 10 (January 1990): 27.

¹² Cf. Secretariat for the Major Archiepiscopal Assembly, *Syro-Malabar Sabha Munnam Sahasrabdathilecku: Dauthyavum Lakshyavum* (Mount St. Thomas: Secretariat for the Major Archiepiscopal Assembly, 1998), 12.

2.1 Aim of Catechesis

According to the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* the specific character of catechesis is to help maturing of the initial faith and educate the true discipleship of Christ.¹³ Jesus Christ is the perfect and final image to whom every baptized person must grow and mature.¹⁴ So *Catechesi Tradendae* says, “The specific aim of catechesis is to develop, with God’s help, an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old.”¹⁵ D.S Amalorpavadas in his book *Theology of Catechesis* says, “catechesis aims at awakening, nourishing and developing the faith, while renewing, deepening and perfecting the initial conversion making it ever more personal and actual.”¹⁶

The Church aims not only in the salvation of the soul but also believes in the resurrection of the body. So through catechesis the Church aims the integral goodness of the persons.¹⁷ Thus the process of catechesis makes the persons capable of living a mature Christian faith,¹⁸ which is the result of “a profound transformation of mind and heart.”¹⁹ Catechesis aims “at educating believers to deepen their personal love for Christ, and through Him to enter into closer personal and community relationship with the Father in the Spirit and with one another in world of today.”²⁰ That is, “the seed of faith, planted in the Christian at baptism, has to sprout,

¹³ Cf. *CT* 16.

¹⁴ Cf. Anto Amarnad, *Creative Catechesis* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000), 91.

¹⁵ *CT* 20.

¹⁶ D.S. Amalorpavadas, *Theology of Catechesis* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1973), 13.

¹⁷ Cf. Joseph Powathil, *Sabha Karmmavediyil*, Jose Kochuparambil, ed. , (Changanassery: St. Joseph’s Orphanage Book Stall, 1995), 235.

¹⁸ Cf. Mathew Vellanickal, “Mathabodhanam Engane Nadakkanam,” *Kathiroli* 27 (April 1988): 9.

¹⁹ *GDC* 55.

²⁰ *Guide Lines for Study of the Theme of the Synod of Bishops* (New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1977), 28.

develop and reach full growth; the child of God, newly born with the life in Christ, has to attain ‘maturity in Christ,’ and become an adult and responsible Christian and a living witness to Christ.”²¹ So the aim of catechesis is to lead the persons to “a living union with Christ through an active participation in His mystery.”²²

2.2 Tasks of Catechesis

A mature Christian life is a life of faith. This life of faith required an education of faith, which is the task of catechesis.²³ It should be done in various dimensions. In order to help the persons to know, celebrate and to contemplate the mysteries of Jesus Christ the *General Directory for Catechesis* explains six fundamental tasks:

a) *Promoting knowledge of the faith*: Catechesis must lead the persons to grasp the whole truth about the divine plan. It should be done by introducing them to a knowledge of Tradition and of Scripture. Thus by deepening the knowledge of faith, catechesis can nourish not only the life of faith but equips it to explain itself to the world.²⁴

b) *Liturgical education*: The Christian faithful should have the awareness of the presence of Jesus Christ in liturgy. So catechesis must promote the knowledge of the meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments and educate the faithful for prayer, for repentance, for community spirit etc. which are essential for a true liturgical life.²⁵

c) *Moral formation*: Conversion to Jesus Christ is necessary to be a true disciple of Him. Therefore catechesis must transmit the attitudes of Jesus to the

²¹ Ibid.

²² Cyril de Souza, *Catechesis for India Today* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1994), 80.

²³ Cf. Amalorpavadas, 13.

²⁴ Cf. GDC 85.

²⁵ Cf. Ibid.

faithful which lead them to an interior transformation. This moral formation by catechesis must always illustrate the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel too.²⁶

d) *Teaching to pray*: The disciples of Jesus should assume the attitude of prayer and contemplation which Jesus himself had. So catechesis must teach the faithful to pray with Jesus and to pray with the same sentiments of Jesus towards the Father.²⁷

e) *Education for community life*: Catechesis must educate the faithful the spirit of simplicity and humility, common prayer, mutual forgiveness, fraternal love etc. for a true Christian community life. It must also include the ecumenical dimension and should promote fraternal attitudes toward members of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities.²⁸

f) *Missionary initiation*: Catechesis should help the faithful to be present as Christians in society through their professional, cultural and social lives. In order to get their cooperation in different ecclesial services they should be prepared well. It is necessary to foster vocations to priesthood and different forms of religious and missionary vocations. Inter religious dialogues also must be encouraged in catechesis.²⁹

3. Catechesis in the Universal Church

Catechesis is as old as the Church itself. Hence, here we will discuss briefly the history of catechesis in the Universal Church. This history can be divided into four periods: in the early centuries, sixth century onwards, sixteenth century onwards and catechesis in the modern period.

²⁶ Cf. Ibid.

²⁷ Cf. Ibid.

²⁸ Cf. Ibid. , no. 86.

²⁹ Cf. Ibid.

3.1 In the Early Centuries

From the beginning itself it is considered that catechesis as one of the primary missions of the Church. It was given to those who were preparing for Baptism. That is, the basic principles of faith were orally introduced to them. The formation was continued even after their Baptism. They were taught deeply about the mysteries of Christ and about the initial Sacraments. In that sense it was known as *mystagogical catechesis*.³⁰

Catechesis was the common term used to denote all the efforts of the Apostles and their followers in order to give Christ the Word of God to others and to make them disciples of Christ. At that time all the members of the Church- Bishops, priests, laity- were interested in that same ministry. Apostles taught through their preaching and epistles. The early Fathers shared their knowledge through their writings.³¹ An early writing *Didache* is an example, which helped a lot for faith formation.³² St. Augustine's *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, written about 405,³³ was another important writing. The catechetical writings of St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, St. Ambrose, St. Theodore etc. were also famous at that time. But these writings were not called catechisms.³⁴ There were some Fathers who gave faith formation through Theological Centres. Faith formation centres of Hippolitus at Rome and Origen at

³⁰ Cf. Xavier Kochuparambil, *Katholicka Sabhayude Mathabodhanagrantham: Oramukham* (Palarivattom: POC Publication, 1997), 1.

³¹ Cf. Ibid. , 2.

³² Cf. F. X. Murphy, 228.

³³ Cf. Gerard S. Sloyan, "Religious Education: From Early Christianity to Medieval Times," Michael Warren, ed. , *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics* (Winona: Christian Brothers Publications, 1983), 120.

³⁴ Cf. Kochuparambil, 2.

Alexandria were examples of these kinds.³⁵ Thus we can see that from the beginning itself there was faith formation or catechesis all over the Church.

3.2 Sixth Century Onwards

In the first five centuries catechesis was focussed primarily on the instructions given to the adults.³⁶ But from about sixth century onwards the Christian families became very strong and the parents were capable of instructing their children in faith and Christian life.³⁷ Baptism was given more to children than adults. So the number of catechumens reduced and as a result by the sixth century the organized *catechumenate* had all disappeared.³⁸ Catechesis then meant for faith formation for those who received Baptism and it was given mainly through the homilies in the churches. By eleventh century there were schools attached to churches and catechesis was given to the children through them. Liturgical celebrations were the best means for faith formation. Novenas and other devotional practices also helped a lot. Various Christian arts also developed in this period. From fourteenth century there were small books which helped for faith formation. The first book of this kind is written by John Thoresby, the Bishop of England, in 1357.³⁹ It was translated into English by the title *Lay Folks Catechism*.⁴⁰ The Creed, Sacraments, commandments of charity etc. were the content of this book. Thus the term catechism was used in the history from fourteenth century onwards.⁴¹

³⁵ Cf. Joseph Thadathil, “Sarvathrikasabhayude Mathabodhanacharithram,” *Karunikan 1* (June 2004): 20.

³⁶ Cf. M. E. Jegen, “Catechesis, II (Medieval),” Berard L. Marthaler, ed., *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second ed. (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 228.

³⁷ Cf. Kochuparampil, *Katholicka Sabhayude Mathabodhanagrantham: Oramukham*, 2.

³⁸ Cf. Jegen, “Catechesis, II (Medieval),” 229.

³⁹ Cf. Thadathil, 21.

⁴⁰ Cf. Jegen, “Catechesis, II (Medieval),” 229.

⁴¹ Cf. Kochuparampil, *Katholicka Sabhayude Mathabodhanagrantham: Oramukham*, 4.

3.3 Sixteenth Century onwards

The faith formation in the Church became stronger from the sixteenth century onwards. Based on a certain syllabus, catechism text books were prepared. The renewal efforts for faith formation started in the fifth Lateran Council (1513-1517). In 1529 Martin Luther published two catechisms: one is *Large Catechism* which is meant for parents, catechists and priests and the other is *Small Catechism* which is meant for children.⁴² With this catechism became famous.⁴³ Followed by, Kelvin in 1541, Peter Canisius in 1554-1556 and Edmund Augar in 1563 published their catechetical books.⁴⁴ In 1566 the Trent Council published a catechism known as the *Roman Catechism*.⁴⁵ Robert Bellarmin also published a catechism in 1597 in Italy.⁴⁶ Trent Council had a great influence on the faith formation and in publishing books both for young and old. More than that, each diocese started to prepare books under the leadership of Bishops.⁴⁷ Napoleon's *Imperial Catechism*⁴⁸ was prepared in this period. The faith formation classes for children according to their age level were also a speciality of this period. All the catechisms in this period were in the form of question and answer⁴⁹ which helped to memorise the basic principles of faith easily.

⁴² Cf. Thadathil, 22.

⁴³ Cf. M. E. Jegen, "Catechesis, III (Reformation)," Berard L. Marthaler, ed., *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second ed. (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 233.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ibid.

⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid.

⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 234.

⁴⁷ Cf. Thadathil, 22.

⁴⁸ Cf. A. Latreille, "Catechism, Imperial," Berard L. Marthaler, ed., *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second ed. (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 236.

⁴⁹ Cf. Kochuparampil, *Katholicka Sabhayude Mathabodhanagrantham: Oramukham*, 5.

3.4 In the Modern Period

In 1870 the First Vatican Council discussed a universal catechism for the Church. But it did not succeed. After that in 1905 Pope Pius X published a catechism. The *Valiya Vēdōpadēsham* in Malayalam is the translation of that. The theological universities in Munich and Vienna also made their effort to renew the ways of catechesis in this period. Through the encyclical *Provido Sane Concilio* Pope Pius XI made an instruction to renew the catechetical systems. The International Faith Formation Congresses conducted from 1928 onwards had always encouraged faith formation.⁵⁰

The immediate renewal in faith formation was started by the Second Vatican Council. The Council actually prescribed a *Directory for the Catechetical Instruction of the Christian People* and it was fulfilled in 1971 by publishing the *General Catechetical Directory* by the Congregation for the Clergy.⁵¹ This has paved the way for the renewal of the catechetical ministry in the entire Church.⁵² It has also helped the local Churches to develop local catechetical directories and catechism text books. So the Synod of Bishops in 1977 decided to publish a document on the theology of catechesis. As a result Pope John Paul II in 1979 promulgated the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*. After that, a Synod held in 1985 took the decision to publish a catechism comprising all the teachings of the Catholic Church. It was realized in 1992 by the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *General Catechetical Directory* of 1971 was renewed and published in 1997 by name, *General Directory for Catechesis* by the Congregation for the Clergy in order to

⁵⁰ Cf. Thadathil, 22.

⁵¹ Cf. Berard Marthaler, “The Genesis and Genius of the General Catechetical Directory,” Michael Warren, ed. , *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics* (Winona: Christian Brothers Publications, 1983), 256.

⁵² Cf. Synodal Commission for Catechesis, *Call and Response: Catechetical Directory of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Kakkanad: Synodal Commission for Catechesis, 2003), no. 1.

contextualize and adapt the catechetical ministry of the Church.⁵³ This was a great help in the catechetical field.

4. Catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church

We have seen that catechesis is as old as Church itself. Hence the history of catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church also be seen in different periods. We will see it in three periods: till sixteenth century, sixteenth century onwards and nineteenth century onwards.

4.1 Up to Sixteenth Century

There are no written documents with regard to the catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church before the arrival of the Western missionaries. The only proof we have is the growth in faith of the community.⁵⁴ So here we see the ways which the Syro-Malabar Christians used in order to maintain their faith and to handover this faith to the generations.

4.1.1 Evangelization

In the early times catechesis was actually evangelization. So it is believed that in the early centuries there should have been the proclamation of the Word of God and reception of Baptism with preparation. Xavier Kochuparambil in his article, *Aradhanajeevitham Mathabodhanathilude* says that the early Christians in the Syro-Malabar Church were so zealous in proclaiming the Word of God and there was evidence that they had proclaimed the message of Gospel in various parts of India and China. Those who joined to their community were protected by the responsible

⁵³ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 2.

⁵⁴ Cf. Xavier Kochuparambil, “Aradhanajeevitham Mathabodhanathilude,” *Kathiroli* 4 (November 1984): 10.

faithful.⁵⁵ So proclaiming the Word of God was not an unknown realm for the Syro-Malabar Christians.

4.1.2 Religious Disciplines

It is believed that the early Syro-Malabar Christians learned the first lessons of faith through their parents in the families. Their life was always centred on parish churches.⁵⁶ There was no formal catechesis for them. *Call and Response*, the Catechetical Directory of the Syro-Malabar Church says about this as follows:

Catechesis of the St. Thomas Christians was not formal and systematic; it was mainly informal and liturgical. Liturgy was the principal means, mode and source of catechesis. Catechetical instructions was given to adults along with the liturgical celebrations, while children were given special instruction either before or after the Holy Qurbana on the mysteries of faith, and were asked to recite and memorize the basic prayers of the Church. Another means was the customary practices, both in the family and community level. These are the ways by which faith was handed down, preserved and propagated for centuries among St. Thomas Christians.⁵⁷

The *Call and Response* also says that there was a *catechumenate* system for the faith formation among the early Christians of Syro-Malabar Church. But that was not as formal as in other Churches.⁵⁸ The liturgical celebrations and the celebrations of other feasts also played an important role in the transmission of faith.⁵⁹ There was occasional catechesis especially during the commemoration of the dead.⁶⁰ The Holy Week also was a special time for sharing and deepening their faith. Reading of *Pāna*

⁵⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 11-12.

⁵⁶ Cf. Xavier Kochuparambil, “Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram,” *Karunikan* 1 (June 2004): 25.

⁵⁷ *Call and Response*, no. 14.

⁵⁸ Cf. Ibid. , no. 13.

⁵⁹ Cf. Ibid. , no. 15.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid. , no. 16.

in the families and the celebration of the Passover Feast were of great importance on that occasion.⁶¹

The ceremonies and customs related to birth and death were also means for the transmission of faith. The priests, called *Kathanārs* were the main catechists among them. Usually they had their training from the *Malpāns*.⁶² In the Catechetical Directory of the Syro-Malabar Church, *Call and Response*, it is written that even the *Āshān Kalaries* were also centres for the catechetical instruction of children. It is because, here the children were taught the fundamental prayers and principles of faith, even by the non- Christian *Āshāns*.⁶³

4.1.3 Life Witness

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* Pope Paul VI says, “Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness.”⁶⁴ It was true in the case of early Syro-Malabar Christians. It is mainly through their life witness that they preserved, nourished and shared their faith. By preserving their faith, they could live in the midst of non- Christians for centuries. There is nothing more than this to prove that they had wonderful catechetical trainings from time to time.⁶⁵ They lived an ascetical life. Their prayers and ascetical practices were means to deepen their Christ experience. They had a good relationship with their non- Christian neighbours. They could also keep a high moral status in their ordinary life.⁶⁶ This also showed that there was faith formation in those centuries.

⁶¹ Cf. Ibid. , no. 17.

⁶² Cf. Kallarangatt, “St. Thomas Christians of India Ecclesiological Heritages and Perspectives before the Seventeenth Century,” 33-34.

⁶³ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 18.

⁶⁴ EN 21.

⁶⁵ Cf. Kochuparampil, “Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram,” 25.

⁶⁶ Cf. Kochuparampil, “Aradhanajeevitham Mathabodhanathilude,” 14.

4.1.4 Catechesis and Liturgy

Liturgy was the centre of the life of Syro-Malabar Christians. They always insisted and had given great priority for the liturgical catechesis.⁶⁷ Through the solemn celebrations of liturgy the ancestors transmitted the true faith to generation to generation. Liturgy was the main place for catechesis. They followed the East Syrian Liturgy and most of its prayers were catechetical. Through the liturgical celebrations they learned and experienced the basic mysteries of faith like mystery of Holy Trinity, Incarnation, new life after death etc.⁶⁸

Besides these they had the Divine Office in the parish churches everyday.⁶⁹ It also helped them to go through the liturgical seasons and to meditate on the mysteries of faith. Xavier Kochuparambil in his article *Aradhanajeevitham Mathabodhanathilude* says that it was the liturgy which was the main cause of their growth in faith life.⁷⁰

4.1.5 Influence of Eastern Church Fathers

The writings of Eastern Church Fathers influenced a lot in this period. Most of those Fathers were well known catechists. Xavier Kochuparambil mentions some of those Fathers in his article *Aradhanajeevitham Mathabodhanathilude*. Theodore of Mopsuestia, Mar Narsai etc. were some of them. The collection of sixteen homilies of Theodore⁷¹ contained the explanation of the Creed, Holy Eucharist, Baptism, Our Father etc. Mainly these homilies were meant for those who were preparing for

⁶⁷ Cf. Kallarangatt, “St. Thomas Christians of India Ecclesiological Heritages and Perspectives Before the Seventeenth Century,” 39.

⁶⁸ Cf. Kochuparambil, “Aradhanajeevitham Mathabodhanathilude,” 14.

⁶⁹ Cf. Aerthayil, 34.

⁷⁰ Cf. Kochuparambil, “Aradhanajeevitham Mathabodhanathilude,” 27.

⁷¹ Cf. F. A. Sullivan, “Theodore of Mopsuestia,” Berard L. Marthaler, ed. , *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second ed. (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 875.

Baptism.⁷² Mar Narsai's commentaries and homilies on liturgy were also famous. Chaldean Church Father Mar Ephrem also influenced the early Syro-Malabar Christians through his writings and explanations of mysteries of faith.⁷³

4.2 From Sixteenth Century to Eighteenth Century

From the sixteenth century onwards the catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church was mainly centred on different catechisms. Followed by Martin Luther's catechism in 1529 different theological scholars published catechisms in different places. The imitations and translations of that also influenced in the Syro-Malabar Church.⁷⁴ So here we see some of those catechisms and books which influenced the Christians of the Syro-Malabar Church.

4.2.1 Catechism of St. Francis Xavier

St. Francis Xavier was a pioneer in introducing a popular method of catechetical instruction.⁷⁵ He was the first person who used a catechism for faith formation in India. He was a well known catechist.⁷⁶ His major work was a catechism lesson based on the Apostles' Creed.⁷⁷ It was the translation of Juan Baros' catechism which was published in Portuguese language from Lisbon in 1539. He translated the prayers like Our Father, Hail Mary, the Creed, the Ten Commandments etc. from this book into Tamil. This book was published in 1557, after five years of his death. In 1607, Albert Dinnobily translated this into Sanskrit.⁷⁸

⁷² Cf. Kochuparampil, "Aradhanajeevitham Mathabodhanathilude," 28.

⁷³ Cf. Ibid. , 29.

⁷⁴ Cf. Kochuparampil, "Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram," 26.

⁷⁵ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 178.

⁷⁶ Cf. Kochuparampil, "Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram," 26.

⁷⁷ Cf. De Souza, 14.

⁷⁸ Cf. Kochuparampil, "Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram," 26.

Even though the Syro-Malabar Christians were not under the mission field of St. Francis Xavier, he used to visit their houses and had good relationship with them. According to Xavier Kochuparampil the catechism of St. Francis Xavier might have influenced the catechesis of Syro-Malabar Christians because they were also members of the special programmes of Jesuit Congregation to which St. Francis Xavier belonged.⁷⁹

4.2.2 *Doctrina Christam* (*Christīya Tatvasamhithakal*)

A Jesuit priest Henricus was the author of the book *Doctrina Christam*.⁸⁰ This book was published from Cochin in 1579.⁸¹ It was the translation of the catechism of Markose George published in the Portuguese language. The content of this book was based on Revelation and Tradition. So Xavier Kochuparampil's opinion is that it might also have been influenced in the catechesis of the Syro-Malabar Christians.⁸²

4.2.3 Synod of Diamper and Catechesis

Catechesis of the Syro-Malabar Church in the seventeenth century was very much related to the Synod of Diamper. The eighteenth Decree of the eighth session of the Synod was on catechesis. These Decrees contained the explanations of rituals and celebrations of faith, the Christian principles etc. and it was used for catechesis for a long time. Xavier Kochuparampil says that the need for catechesis and the methods of catechesis were mentioned in these Decrees. Parents, *Malpāns* and *Kalari Āshāns* were instructed to teach the mysteries of faith to the children. It was also

⁷⁹ Cf. Ibid.

⁸⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 27.

⁸¹ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 19.

⁸² Cf. Kochuparampil, “Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram,” 27.

instructed that those who were coming for Baptism should be prepared well. And it was compulsory that all the churches should have a copy of this Decree⁸³ and so each parish priest was given a copy of it in Malayalam.⁸⁴

The Catechetical Directory of the Syro-Malabar Church, *Call and Response* says that by the Synod of Diamper the informal way of handing down the faith was changed to a formal and systematic one. The liturgy centred catechesis was also changed to an instruction- oriented one.⁸⁵ After the Synod of Diamper Archbishop Menezis prepared a catechism and that is known as the *Menezian Catechism*. *Call and Response*, the Catechetical Directory of the Syro-Malabar Church explains its instructions as follows:

The parish priests were asked to teach the people catechism by reciting the prayers and articles of faith. They were asked to teach the people the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the Ten Commandments of God, the Commandments of the Church, the Articles of faith and the other essential items of the catechism. Instead of teaching catechism in Syriac, the priests were asked to do it in Malayalam, the vernacular. The priests were asked to give special instructions to the people, young and adults on Sundays, by using the method of repeated recitation. They were asked to conduct catechism classes exclusively for the children on Sunday evenings. These mandatory regulations of the Synod of Diamper contributed much to the systematic development of the catechetical system of the Syro-Malabar Church.⁸⁶

4.2.4 Statutes of Bishop Rose

Rose S.J., the Bishop of Angamaly prepared a *Statute* for the use of priests in 1606.⁸⁷ It gives instructions to the priests for what to study, how to study etc.

⁸³ Cf. Ibid. , 28.

⁸⁴ Thekkedath, 74.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 20.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Cf. Thekkedath, 77.

Catechesis is done by making the faithful recite the prayers repeatedly. There were special preparation for Confession and First Holy Communion.⁸⁸ The *Statutes* of Rose is actually the reformulated edition of *Menezian Catechism*.⁸⁹ So the efforts of Archbishop Menezis and Bishop Rose caused the different theological visions and Ecclesiology in the Syro-Malabar Church. On the other hand, it was in this period that a systematic catechesis through catechism text books started in the parishes.⁹⁰

4.2.5 Catechesis and Carmelite Mission

After the *Cōōnan* Cross Oath of 1653 the Syro-Malabar Christians were under the Carmelite missionaries. These missionaries were zealous retreat preachers and they used to visit parishes in order to catechise them. They taught Bible stories to the children. The retreats in the parishes conducted on special occasions like great feasts were meant for the catechesis of adults. The Carmelite priests formed catechumenates in many places and had given preparation for Baptism. Many of the Western style of practices which are seen in the Syro-Malabar Church today are mainly the contributions of these missionaries.⁹¹ It shows that there was a noticeable catechesis in this period. More than a systematic catechesis, the religious spirit and moral life of the community caused by their efforts helped the Christians of Syro-Malabar Church to preserve their faith.⁹²

There were several catechisms and prayer books in this period. In 1700 the missionaries published a catechism known as *Catechismus Doctrinae Christianae in Lingua Malabarica*.⁹³ Bishop Angello Francis' *Malabar Catechism* was another one.

⁸⁸ Cf. Kochuparambil, "Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram," 28.

⁸⁹ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 21.

⁹⁰ Cf. Kochuparambil, "Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram," 28.

⁹¹ Cf. Ibid. , 29.

⁹² Cf. Ibid.

⁹³ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 21.

The terms like *Mār*, *Malpān*, *Nazrāni* etc. used in this book shows that it was written mainly for the Syro-Malabar Christians.⁹⁴ They published a new catechism in 1772 known as *Samkshēpa Vēdārtham*. This was the first printed book in Malayalam.⁹⁵ It contained 276 pages and it was written in the model of question and answer. The Creed, Our Father, Commandments, Sacraments etc. included in it and it influenced a lot in the catechesis of the Syro-Malabar Christians.⁹⁶

4.3 Nineteenth Century Onwards

During this period there occurred a lot of developments in the catechetical field of the Syro-Malabar Church. Chavara's catechetical contributions also come under this period. Establishment of Religious Congregations, Schools, Catechumenates attached to Monasteries, publication of prayer books and devotional books etc. under the leadership of Chavara we have already seen in the second chapter. That was really the beginning of the further developments in the catechetical field of the Syro-Malabar Church. So as further developments we discuss here the main topics like Prayer books, School catechisms, catechism text book series etc.

4.3.1 *Nithyārādhānāpusthakam*

Nithyārādhānāpusthakam or *Perpetual Adoration* was a prayer book published from Mannanam. Its first edition was released in 1875.⁹⁷ More than any other books it had influenced the Syro-Malabar Church. It is related to catechesis in this sense that it had led many people towards the experience of God. There were no Syrian family in Kerala which did not have a copy of this book. Prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, prayers for the preparation of Confession, Holy Communion etc. were

⁹⁴ Cf. Kochuparampil, "Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram," 29.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 21.

⁹⁶ Cf. Kochuparampil, "Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram," 30.

⁹⁷ Cf. Z.M. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 75.

included in it. For ordinary people this prayer book was a great help. It could prepare the people for prayer life. That was the catechetical value of this book.⁹⁸

4.3.2 Catechesis in the Schools

Catechesis in the Schools is also very important in the history of catechesis. When Schools were started attached to parish churches,⁹⁹ catechesis automatically shifted to the Schools. Priests, religious and lay teachers came forward to animate the classes. *Valiya Vēdōpadēsham*, the translations of the Catechism of Pope Pius X was the main text book for catechesis both in Sunday Schools and in the regular Schools.¹⁰⁰ After that a shortened form of *Valiya Vēdōpadēsham* by name *Cheriya Vēdōpadēsham* also came to be used. These catechisms prevailed in the Syro-Malabar Church until Second Vatican Council.¹⁰¹

A text book series named *Matha Tathwa Bōdhini* was published in 1940 for School catechism. Moral education was also introduced for the non- Catholic students in the regular Schools.¹⁰² In 1953 the diocese of Palai took initiative and prepared a Sunday School text book named *Mathōpadēshika*. A faith formation text book series named *Matha Tathwa Pradēēpam* was also published in 1956.¹⁰³

4.3.3 Pastoral Orientation Centre (POC)

After Second Vatican Council, the NBCLC, under the guidance of CBCI, gave leadership to develop a catechism text book series for all the dioceses of India. Later,

⁹⁸ Cf. . Kochuparampil, “Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram,” 31.

⁹⁹ Cf. Valerian, 16.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 21.

¹⁰² Cf. Ibid. no. 22.

¹⁰³ Cf. Kochuparampil, “Keralathile Mathabodhanacharithram,” 32.

the regional Episcopal councils began to develop catechisms in their own vernacular languages.¹⁰⁴ Hence, in Kerala, the establishment of Pastoral Orientation Centre had a specific role in the renaissance of catechesis. Renewing the syllabus, preparing catechism text books according to the modern times, conducting seminars and courses for the teachers of faith formation, making available Bible pictures, charts, songs etc. as aids for teaching etc. had done by this Pastoral Orientation Centre. This could be the Centre of Diploma Courses in Theology, Bible, Catechesis etc. for Religious and lay people.¹⁰⁵ Under the guidance of the KCBC, in 1970, POC prepared a common text book series for all the three Catholic Churches of Kerala.¹⁰⁶ The first common text book series published by the KCBC was *Pithavin Pakkalēcku* (Towards the Father). Later they published a new series named *Kristhuvinte Pinnāle* (In the Foot Steps of Christ). A catechetical series named *Deivam Nammōdukōōde* was prepared and published in between by the Inter- diocesan Catechetical Committee of Changanassery.¹⁰⁷

From 1968 to 1999, the catechism for the Kerala Catholic Church was under the guidance of the KCBC. But from 1999 onwards this responsibility was entrusted to the catechetical commission of each of the individual Churches. Thus the Catechetical Commission of the Syro-Malabar Church became responsible for the co-ordination and animation of the catechetical ministry of the Syro-Malabar Church.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 23.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. P.T.Thomas, “Keralasabhayile Mathabodhanaparipadiyude Naveekaranam,” *Kathiroli* 15 (September- October 1976): 834.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 23.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ibid. , no. 24.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Ibid. , no. 25.

5. Salient Features of Catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church

In the Syro-Malabar Church there are two other terms in Malayalam- *Mathabōdhanam*¹⁰⁹ and *Viswāsaparishēēlanam-* which are used instead of the term catechesis. They have almost the same meaning as catechesis. But there is a slight difference in the emphasis given to certain particular aspects. That is, *Mathabōdhanam* emphasizes the instructive dimension, while *Viswāsaparishēēlanam* emphasizes the formative dimension of catechesis.¹¹⁰ We have seen that in the field of faith formation the Syro-Malabar Church was very zealous from the beginning. In union with the heart of the Universal Church the Syro-Malabar Church sees Her duty to give formation of Her own faithful as follows:

A person who is either born in or made a member of a particular Church has to be given formation in the traditions of that particular Church. He/She should see, hear, touch and experience the way of life of that particular faith community. He/She should be introduced to and integrated into the liturgy, spirituality, discipline, and customs of the particular Church. The Syro-Malabar Church, being a *sui juris* Church in the Catholic communion, should have a catechesis of its own in order to integrate the faithful into the particular traditions of this Church.¹¹¹

Now the Syro-Malabar Church has a Catechetical Directory of its own under the title *Call and Response: the Catechetical Directory of the Syro-Malabar Church* published in 2001. According to this Directory, “faith is a response to the call of the Lord and catechesis is the formation of the faithful enabling them to give this response in their life context.”¹¹² This formation should include mainly ecclesial formation, Liturgical formation, Spiritual formation, Religious formation etc. So here

¹⁰⁹ With regard to the method of catechesis the Syro-Malabar Church prefer to present the content of catechesis straight from the Bible or faith matters from the teachings of the Church. They are not strictly following the Anthropological approach in catechesis.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Call and Response* , no. 48.

¹¹¹ Ibid. , no. 26.

¹¹² Ibid. , no. 5.

we discuss some of these important features of the catechesis of the Syro-Malabar Church.

5.1 Ecclesial Christian Life Formation

Catechesis “is a ministry of the Church, by the Church, and for the Church.”¹¹³ So an ecclesial Christian life formation is necessary in catechesis. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasises this truth and says that catechesis should be “an ecclesial catechesis.”¹¹⁴ In the early Church, catechesis was ecclesial. In order to give formation to persons or communities in a particular Church, they have to be given formation in five different dimensions which differentiate one particular Church from the other. That is, they have to be given formation in Apostolicity, Liturgy, Spirituality, Theology and Discipline of that particular Church.¹¹⁵ Traditions, Bible, teachings of the Church Fathers and models of Saints are to be used as sources for this formation. It is through an Ecclesial Christian life formation, the change of knowledge, change of attitude, change of behaviour and change of action, which the catechesis aims, takes place.¹¹⁶

Catechesis is a process of preparing persons to live a mature Christian faith. So Mathew Vellanickal in his article, *Mathabodhanam Engane Nadakkanam*, says that the process of catechesis aims the formation in the faith of the Church. He says that it can be possible in three ways:

a) *Through the Liturgy*: the prayers, rituals, signs, symbols etc. of the Church are to be used as sources for catechesis.

¹¹³ Ibid. , no. 51.

¹¹⁴ CCC 1697.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Jossy, “Sabhatmaka Mathabodhanam Innathe Sahacharyathil,” *Kathiroli* 31 (June 1991): 14-15.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 16-17.

b) *Through the teachings of the Church*: the authentic teachings of the Church are to be received and to be created new attitudes according to them.

c) *Through the life of the Church*: the life style of the Church is seen in Her Canon Law, Discipline, devotions and spirituality and therefore formation is to be given in these also.¹¹⁷

With regard to the Ecclesial formation Mar Joseph Powathil also writes that Church is the teacher who discipiles us to Christ. We receive faith from the Church and that faith leads us. It is through the participation in the faith experience of the Church that we are forming our faith.¹¹⁸ So Pope John Paul II mentions the need of an ecclesial formation in his encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*, “The teaching imparted in catechesis helps to form the person. As a mode of linguistic communication, catechesis must present the Church’s doctrine in its integrity, demonstrating its link with the life of the faithful.”¹¹⁹

5.2 Liturgical Formation

Liturgy is the best expression of the faith of the Church. So basically, ecclesial formation is liturgical formation.¹²⁰ So formation is to be given in order to participate in the Liturgy whole heartedly and to live according to its spirit.¹²¹ It is through the participation in the Liturgy with the attitudes of adoration, that we are experiencing the heavenly life and receiving the Divine life here on earth. Only this true and real God- experience is the basis of Christian witness.¹²² So Liturgy can be

¹¹⁷ Cf. Vellanickal, “Mathabodhanam Engane Nadakkanam,” 9-10.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Powathil, *Sabha Karmmavediyil*, 295.

¹¹⁹ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), no.99.

¹²⁰ Cf. Powathil, *Sabha Karmmavediyil*, 137.

¹²¹ Cf. Ibid. , 199.

¹²² Cf. Ibid. , 203.

considered as the best source of catechesis in order to nourish and deepen the personal relationship between God and man.¹²³

5.3 Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation is a necessary element in catechesis. In *Ecclesia in Asia* Pope John Paul II says, “All Christians need a true missionary spirituality of prayer and contemplation.”¹²⁴ Good formation is needed in order to pray well. Prayer is the natural self manifestation of Christian life.¹²⁵ It is not meant for emotional satisfaction. But it helps to give positive response to God’s call.¹²⁶ Pope John Paul II explains the necessity of deep rooted spirituality and God experience in *Ecclesia in Asia* as follows:

The more the Christian community is rooted in the experience of God which flows from a living faith, the more credibly it will be able to proclaim to others the fulfilment of God’s Kingdom in Christ. This will result from faithfully listening to the Word of God, from prayer and contemplation, from celebrating the mystery of Jesus in the Sacraments, above all in the Eucharist, and from giving example of true communion of life and integrity of love. Mission is contemplative action and active contemplation. Therefore, a missionary who has no deep experience of God in prayer and contemplation will have little spiritual influence or missionary success...¹²⁷

So formation in spirituality is a necessary help for the faithful to give answer to God’s call through their own lives.¹²⁸ Christian spirituality is to live the faith of the Church. The Word of God and the Sacraments are the important sources of Christian

¹²³ Cf. Jose Philip, “Mathadhyapakare Ithile Ithile,” *Kathiroli* 20 (March 1981): 120.

¹²⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1999), no. 23.

¹²⁵ Cf. Powathil, *Sabha Karmmavediyil*, 210.

¹²⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 347.

¹²⁷ EA 23.

¹²⁸ Cf. Powathil, *Sabha Karmmavediyil*, 426.

spirituality.¹²⁹ Prayer is the necessary link between the proclamation of the Word of God and the Church's Sacramental life.¹³⁰ So these sources are to be used in catechesis in order to develop and to nourish Christian spirituality among the faithful.

5.4 Asceticism and Monasticism

Asceticism and Monasticism had a special place in the life of the Syro-Malabar Church from the beginning itself. So catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church includes also formation in Asceticism and Monasticism. This Church wants the monks to become not only ascetics but also charismatic heralds of the Good News to their fellow brethren. Hence the catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church also meant to find out as many small houses of prayer as possible. An authentic monastic formation is needed to those who take such a way of life. They have to live in *āshrams* of humble surroundings not far removed from people and sharing their way of life. Their life is passive and indirect but at the same time intense and dynamic.¹³¹

The Syro-Malabar Church is happy about the *āshram movement* already started by some of her members. She considers it as a welcome step to foster the spirit of prayer and contemplation. With regard to this kind of life style the attitude of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church is as follows:

An ashram is a place of intense and sustained spiritual quest and contemplation with a simple life style. It is essentially a centre of prayer and silence. These *ashramites* are the living symbols of divine presence for the outside world and also for the members of the Church.... Such ashram life style can lead people of our missionary dioceses closer and closer to the divine Guru, Jesus Christ.¹³²

¹²⁹ Cf. *Syro-Malabar Sabha Munnam Sahasrabdathilecku: Dauthyavum Lakshyavum*, 13.

¹³⁰ Cf. D.S.Amalorpavadas, ed. , *Evangelisation of the Modern World* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1975), 46.

¹³¹ Cf. The Synod of Bishops of Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church, *The Mission Policy of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church* (Kakkanad: Mount St. Thomas, 2006), 38.

¹³² Ibid. , 39.

Catechesis aims to meet Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Ascetic and Monastic way of life helps to achieve this goal of catechesis in a special way.

5.5 Clerical and Religious Formation

The Syro-Malabar Church gives special attention to the formation of the priests and religious. They are consecrating themselves to God in order to use their lives fully to God's people. It is their duty to give God to God's people.¹³³ So they are the beloved people of the Mother Church. They are the ministers of the Church who are participating fully in the mission of the Church.¹³⁴ Hence it is necessary to give formation to them according to the needs of their own particular Churches. Pope John Paul II says:

I commend you, the Pastors of the Oriental Catholic Churches of India, for your efforts to ensure the ecclesial formation of the faithful of all ages, especially those who are called upon to exercise the catechetical ministry. For the further strengthening of your Churches your efforts in this field need to be intensified and coordinated. Special attention should be given to the formation dispensed in minor and major seminaries, houses of formation and novitiates of religious institutes.¹³⁵

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Training of Priests, *Optatam Totius*, says, "They should be taught to seek Christ in faithful meditation on the Word of God and in active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially the Eucharist and the Divine Office."¹³⁶ The Decree *Ad Gentes* proposes a spiritual, doctrinal and a pastoral formation to them.¹³⁷ Earlier the ecclesial formation

¹³³ Cf. Mathew Mattathil, "Ajapalanavum Mathabodhanavum," *Kathioli* 26 (August 1987): 33.

¹³⁴ Cf. Powathil, *Sabha Karmmavediyil*, 135.

¹³⁵ John Paul II, "The Church is Impelled towards a New Missionary Evangelization," *The Voice of the Church* (Reprints from *L'Osservatore Romano*) 14 (February 1986): 84.

¹³⁶ Vatican II, *Optatam Totius*, Austin Flannery, ed. , *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Mumbai: St. Paul Publications, 2004), no. 8.

¹³⁷ Vatican II, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, Austin Flannery, ed. , *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Mumbai: St. Paul Publications, 2004), no. 16.

of the clergy in the Syro-Malabar Church was done in the *Malpānates*. But by the establishment of St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary at Vadavathoor in 1962 it is possible for the Syro-Malabar Church to impart a proper clerical and religious formation in full harmony with the ecclesial heritage of this Church.¹³⁸ The priests and religious are supposed to be genuine spokesmen of the Church. They have to play a very important role in the formation of the rising generation.¹³⁹ The Second Vatican Council's Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* says that they are to be mature in knowledge and that their teaching should be a spiritual medicine for the People of God.¹⁴⁰

5.6 Formation of the Laity

The Synodal Commission for Evangelization says, “An enlightened and committed laity is the biggest capital of the Syro-Malabar Church.”¹⁴¹ The formation of the laity starts from their own families where the parents are the educators of faith. Faith formation of their children is the primary duty of the parents.¹⁴² “The Christian family is the first school in which a Christian is taught love for God and for his or her neighbour.”¹⁴³ Through Baptism and other Sacraments, especially through marriage, the members of the families are called to the task of making the Church.¹⁴⁴ Hence the

¹³⁸ Cf. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 125.

¹³⁹ Cf. Joseph Powathil, “Ecclesial Formation,” Thomas Vellilamthadam and others, eds., *Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute Publications, 1985), 27.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Austin Flannery, ed. , *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2004), no.19.

¹⁴¹ Synodal Commission for Evangelization, *Jesus' Mission: Church's Reason to be* (Thrikkakkara: Mount St. Thomas, 1999), 41.

¹⁴² Cf. Powathil, *Sabha Karmmavediyil*, 236.

¹⁴³ Synod of Bishops, *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World* (New Delhi: Devarsons, 1980), 7.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Pastoral Missionary Commission of the Central Committee for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, *The Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 1999), 76.

Syro-Malabar Church finds the necessity of the formation of lay people in catechesis. Their training is given primarily at the level of family, parish and small ecclesial communities. There are special theological centres for their higher theological formation.¹⁴⁵ Since the Church considers the formation of the laity as very important, a comprehensive training for them, including various areas of Church's life, is to be contained as part of catechesis.

5.7 Formation of the Catechists

The formation of the catechists is another important element in the catechesis of the Syro-Malabar Church. According to the *General Catechetical Directory* “the suitable formation of catechists must come before reform in texts and strengthening of the organization for handling catechesis.”¹⁴⁶ Because, Pope John Paul II says in *Redemptoris Missio*, “People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories.”¹⁴⁷ If the catechists does not deepen and nourish their faith through regular reading, study and prayer proper catechesis cannot possible.¹⁴⁸ Christ must be given not from the book but from the heart of the catechist.¹⁴⁹ In the *Redemptoris Missio* Pope John Paul II says, “We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day.”¹⁵⁰ Catechesis is the continuation of Jesus’ salvific mission. So the catechists are the persons sent by the risen Christ. It is the Spirit of Christ who leads them. They preach the Gospel of salvation like Jesus. Through catechesis they lead the

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *The Mission Policy of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church*, 51.

¹⁴⁶ *GCD* 108.

¹⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1990), no. 42.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Powathil, *Sabha Karmavediyil*, 327.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. S. Kurian Vempeni, “Dauthyavahakare Unaru,” *Dukrana* 5 (July 1985): 22.

¹⁵⁰ *RM* 47.

people towards the unconditional love of God.¹⁵¹ The catechists are teachers or educators of faith. But more than that, they are witnesses and messengers of God.¹⁵²

Call and Response, the Catechetical Directory of the Syro-Malabar Church gives much emphasis to the formation of the catechists. It says that they have to be given a basic formation and an ongoing formation. The basic formation should include formation in the spiritual, doctrinal, anthropological and methodological aspects. By this they will become aware of their divine vocation and their responsibility before God and the Church and formation in all these aspects will help them to become efficient formators of Christian faith.¹⁵³ These four aspects need to be renewed and updated according to the needs of the Church and to the signs of the times. Hence the Catechetical Directory of the Syro-Malabar Church, *Call and Response* proposes an ongoing formation too.¹⁵⁴ They must have a deep spirituality also. That is, “they must live in the Spirit, who will help them to renew themselves continually in their specific identity.”¹⁵⁵ This will help them to look at the reality with a new vision and to communicate to others the richness that comes from their inward experience.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Cf. John Paul II, “Mar Pappa Mathadhyapakarodu,” Thomas Padinjareveetttil, trans. , *Kathiroli* 27 (October 1988): 6-7.

¹⁵² Cf. Gilbert Choondal, *The Formation of Lay Catechists* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2004), 146.

¹⁵³ Cf. *Call and Response*, no. 102.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Ibid. , no. 103.

¹⁵⁵ Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Guide for Catechists* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1994), 16.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. James Connolly, “The Spirituality of the Catechist,” *Word & Worship* 11 (August 1978): 326.

5.8 Pastoral Care of the Migrants

The Syro-Malabar Church considers that it is one of Her important duty to give pastoral care to the migrants. The Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church writes:

The pastoral care of migrants belonging to a particular *sui juris* Church in the territory of another ecclesiastical jurisdiction is also important not only to keep them in the proper ecclesial tradition, but also for fruitful evangelization. An ecclesial community that is built up properly in its ecclesial identity can become an effective agent of evangelization. Through adequate pastoral care alone can the community of the migrants be built into an evangelizing community.¹⁵⁷

About the pastoral care of the migrants Xavier Koodapuzha also writes in his book *Christianity in India* as follows:

Evangelization and pastoral care are the basic obligations of a Church. Those who have evangelized have to be pastorally nourished, assisted and guided. The pastoral care has to be basically ecclesial and it should be in harmony with the heritage and particular pastoral set up in which the believers are spiritually born and brought up.¹⁵⁸

The Church finds out that these migrants lack above all a real ecclesial sense. They cut off from their own proper ecclesial traditions and lose the sense of oneness with the Church.¹⁵⁹ The emigrants are not getting proper faith formation when they used to get at home. They miss very much the Sunday Schools, where their children are supposed to be initiated into genuine Christian life. The very rare priestly and religious vocations among the emigrants are a sign of their decadence in spiritual life. The tradition of evening family prayer and other devotions are fading away among them. All these show the need of proper pastoral care among them.¹⁶⁰ So it is the

¹⁵⁷ *The Mission Policy of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church*, 31.

¹⁵⁸ Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 116-117.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *The Mission Policy of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church*, 31.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 32.

view of the Syro-Malabar Church that “Unless they are given pastoral care, in their own proper ecclesial tradition, they may in the course of time, end up as anonymous Christians in their local community. Some may even think of joining other oriental non- Catholic communities or even may grow indifferent to faith and Church.”¹⁶¹ So catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church takes it as one of her important concerns.

6. Conclusion

Catechesis is meant to empower human persons in all the aspects of their lives. It helps the persons to become mature Christians. Maturity in Christian life includes the integral development of the human persons. So whatever we do by the help of the Holy Spirit for the development of the human persons can be come under catechesis. What Jesus did for the development of the human persons that we are doing through catechesis. So through catechesis the formation of the persons takes place- physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, socially, culturally, intellectually and so on.

In this chapter we tried to make clear the concept of catechesis. We discussed it in the context of the Syro-Malabar Church. Catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church encompasses almost all the areas of human life. This duty is entrusted to each member of this ecclesial community. So at certain times, being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, certain persons appeared with great zeal in order to fulfil this duty which is entrusted to them through the Church. We have seen a zealous person like that in the person of Chavara. Last chapter was a study of his catechetical works in various fields. Besides these, we can see his efforts to give formation in Christian life in his writings also. Written words are the living words and they can be the words of touching hearts. Catechesis aims at touching the hearts of the people in order to make sure their way towards God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Chavara’s writings contain such kind of touching words which really helped and are helping

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

many, formed and are forming many in their Christian life. So we will discuss more about the catechetical themes contained in the writings of Chavara in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

CATECHESIS IN THE WRITINGS OF CHAVARA

1. Introduction

The Word of God is the primary source of catechesis. It is the Word of God which penetrates into the hearts of the human persons and forms and transforms them into new creations. From the very beginning onwards the Church shows a special reverence and love towards the Word of God. The Church is nourished by the Word of God; experienced the Word of God and expressed it in different forms in her teachings. The early Fathers of the Church interpreted the Word of God for the faith formation of the living community. This interpretation and reliving of the Word of God continues till the end of the Church. In the divine plan of God there were certain persons who took initiative for this. We have seen the person of Chavara as one among them. The Word of God penetrated into the heart of Chavara and made him a man of the Word of God. He taught the Word of God through his writings and words.

In this chapter, our aim is to find out the catechetical themes in the writings of Chavara. We have seen a short description of his writings in the second chapter. But here we will see it in a little more detail. The discussion on catechesis we had in the third chapter will be a help for us to go through his writings. Chavara's attempt to give faith formation to his people through his writings was really a success. We find that several of his teachings have catechetical values. For instance, he could explain Christology, Mariology, Eschatology, Religious life, Family life, Prayer life and many other important themes which are worthwhile for faith formation. So in this chapter, first we will see the writings of Chavara in general and then we proceed to his catechetical teachings.

2. Writings of Chavara

Chavara's writings are compiled into four volumes. The first volume is *The Chronicles*. Here Chavara narrates the important historical events connected with the Syro-Malabar Church and also with the two religious communities (CMI and CMC).¹ It consists of five chronicles: on the foundation of the monastery at Mannanam, on the Rocos schism, on the foundation of the monastery at Ampazhakad and on the foundation of the convent at Koonammavu. The second volume is Chavara's *Literary Works*. This poetic creation consists mainly of the following:

- a) *Āthmānuthāpam* (*Compunction of the Soul*): This can be categorised as an epic poem. Its main theme is the lives of Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary. While narrating these, Chavara delves deep into his own personal life.²
- b) *Maranavēēttīl Pādunnathinulla Pāna* (*Dirge*): This is a collection of exhortations and anecdotes which are meant to prepare people to face death with courage and confidence.³ It explains the circumstances of death and sufferings and the truths related to death.⁴
- c) *Anasthāsiāyude Rakthasākshithwam* (*Anasthasia's Martyrdom*): This is a minor epic, describing the martyrdom of the beautiful and holy virgin Anasthasia in Rome under the persecution of Emperor Valerian.⁵

The third volume of Chavara's writings is his *Spiritual Writings*. Chavara did not give any title to this collection. Later the publisher gave the title⁶ *Dhyānasallāpangal* (*Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*) for this. This contains

¹ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 64.

² Cf. Z. M. Moozhoor, "Literary Contributions of Blessed Chavara," *Herald of the East* II (January 1993): 79.

³ Cf. Ibid. , 87.

⁴ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 65.

⁵ Cf. Poonoly, 120.

⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 122.

Chavara's personal meditations and colloquies with God and saints.⁷ The fourth volume is *The Letters*. Under this category there are different kinds of letters and circulars. They can be categorised in this way: Letters to Pope Pius IX, Letters to the President of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, Letters to Bishop, Letters to the Curia of the Discalced Carmelite Order, Letters to the CMI members, Circulars to the CMI Congregation, Letters to CMC Sisters, Letters to Parish Priests, Common Circulars and Business Letters.⁸

The four volumes of Chavara's writings what we have today is written with a great pastoral zeal. In order to live a holy life and to become one with Christ he is giving instructions to his people. His whole life was an open book and the same is reflecting in his written work which contains a number of catechetical ideas, content for catechesis and teachings.

3. Catechetical Teachings in Chavara's Writings

Chavara's writings reflect his personal experience in relation with Jesus as well as with people. It was the result of his deep meditation and prayer. When we analyse his writings we can find out many themes which are related to catechesis. He gives sufficient matters for teaching the true Christian faith. In this sense, his writings consist of a good amount of contents for faith formation. Hence, here we discuss some of these elements such as Christological, Soteriological and Eschatological elements, themes related to Mariology, Sacraments, Religious life, Prayer life, Mystical union etc. The directives which are given by Chavara to the families are also under our discussion.

⁷ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 65.

⁸ Cf. Poonoly, 123.

3.1 Christological and Soteriological Elements

Chavara's meditation was always centred on Jesus Christ. He meditated on the whole life of Jesus. Bible, the teachings of the Church and his own personal experience led him to the true meditation on Jesus Christ. He experienced Jesus as Emmanuel, Redeemer, Father, Mother, Son of God, Son of the Virgin etc. The aim of catechesis is to accept Jesus, the Son of God as our Redeemer and to return to the way of the Cross, the way of Jesus Christ in order to be one with Him. So the themes related to Christ and salvation which Chavara presents here have surely a catechetical value. We present these themes in the following pages.

3.1.1 Christ- Emmanuel

Chavara had a strong conviction about the eternal presence of the Emmanuel who is with him. The experience of God with us- Emmanuel- needs to become an evergreen experience for a Christian.⁹ Chavara had this long desire and so he writes:

“God becoming one with man
Emmanuel, I long to see.”¹⁰

God became man for the whole humanity. He lives in and with them. He is in search of them and waits for them.¹¹ So they have to praise Him in their hearts. Even though they are sinners He chooses their hearts as His dwelling place. So the whole humanity is obliged to love Him and adore Him from their hearts. Chavara conveys these messages also from his own experience, in his own words as follows:

“Emmanuel, Lord praise to you!

⁹ Cf. Sophy Rose, “Christ Experience in Athmanuthapam,” in Paul Kalluveettil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds. , *The Lord of Heaven and Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, CMI* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 269.

¹⁰ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, Mary Leo, trans. , *Complete Works of Blessed Chavara Vol. II* (Mannanam: The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1990), III: 15-16.

¹¹ Cf. Rose, “Christ Experience in Athmanuthapam,” 270.

Singing carols, I praise you!”¹²
“My Lord the Blessed Babe Emmanuel
Did choose to make his dwelling in my heart”¹³
“O God Emmanuel, I, a sinner
With love, adore.”¹⁴

3.1.2 Christ- Redeemer

Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the whole humankind. He is in search of His people, even though they abandoned Him. This was one of the most profound insights Chavara acquired from his Christ experience.¹⁵ He writes:

Certain, I ken, you haven’t cast me off
When I forsook and turned myself away
Still rememb’ring, you followed my trail
Did you not subjugate my mind?¹⁶

Again he writes:

In your look of mercy I behold
A gentle saviour, not a judge
Your out-stretched arms seem as though
Yearning to lock me in your bosom
Your soft lotus feet, I surmise
Are on a race to capture sinners!¹⁷

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). Christian faith proclaims this ultimate truth as Jesus Christ the Saviour and the Redeemer of sinners. This is the centre point of the mystery of God’s eternal plan of salvation.

¹² Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, II: 365-366.

¹³ Ibid. , IV: 189-190.

¹⁴ Ibid. , III Epilogue: 63-64.

¹⁵ Cf. Rose, “Christ Experience in Athmanuthapam,” 272.

¹⁶ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, VII: 245-248.

¹⁷ Ibid. , V: 165-170.

This is the meaning and purpose of the Christ event.¹⁸ Chavara experienced this revealed truth in his life and conveys the message as follows:

“You came down below and became man
To give us salvation”¹⁹

“May your Son, you granted to be
Saviour of all, come forth the virgin womb”²⁰

“O Shepherd gracious, seeking lost sheep
You came, save me, I’ve gone astray”²¹

Chavara presents a real picture of Jesus as a Redeemer in the garden of Gethsemane. According to him the agony of Jesus in the garden is the agony of the good shepherd who is going after the lost sheep. He identifies himself with the lost one and gives the message in the following way:

The Son of Almighty God, the fount of mercy, the eternal Son of God, co-existed with the Lord of God, the sovereign of mankind, the royal son of David, the one who is adored by nine choirs of angels is seen searching in midnight. What is he searching for and whom is he searching? Oh! He is searching for no one else, but me alone! I am his beloved sheep. Yea, He came to the world in search of me and he searched for me for thirty three years. He wandered and streams; he wandered up and down over sharp stones and thorns, deserting his Father’s divine lap. Everything was for me, me alone! And he calls me to his side.²²

3.1.3 Christ- Father and Mother

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity is presented by Chavara as Father and Mother. For him the most affectionate way of calling Christ is ‘my

¹⁸ Cf. Rose, “Christ Experience in Athmanuthapam,” 272.

¹⁹ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, III Epilogue: 43-44.

²⁰ Ibid. , V: 27-28.

²¹ Ibid. , 173-174.

²² Rose, “Christ Experience in Athmanuthapam,” 273. Cf. also Chavarayachan, *Āthmānuthāpam*, Z. M. Moozhoor, Introduced and Prosified (Thevara: Janatha Services, 1990), VII: 257-276.

Father.' He says, "My heart however, tells me to call you by no other name than my Father."²³ He explains the Fatherly love of Jesus Christ: "Still my Father is so generous and full of love that I needn't entertain any fear."²⁴ The experience of Fatherly love of Jesus makes human beings to become His beloved children. Chavara places himself before his loving Father and says, "My loving Father, I'm your son."²⁵ He says again:

His words divine he recalled to his mind
"I am your Father, I, your loving God,
Yet, you thrust this cruel spear in my Heart"
Alas, my Father, my Creator, my Lord²⁶

Jesus is the way to God the Father. By presenting Jesus as Father Chavara brings the unity of Jesus with His Father. Because Jesus says, "The Father and I are one" (Jn. 10:30) and "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9).

In the book of Isaiah we can see the motherly concern and care of Yahweh. "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands" (Is. 49:15-16). Chavara attributes this motherly character to Jesus also. In the Gospel of Mathew Jesus' own words reflect his motherly character. Jesus says, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings" (Mt. 23:37). By recalling "the caring, forgiving, self-giving, tender and merciful love of his 'mother'- Christ- who searched for him, carried his sins, healed his sickness and sacrificed His life for him"²⁷ Chavara writes

²³ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, Jose Chittilappilly, trans. *Complete Works of Blessed Chavara Vol. III* (Mannanam: The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1990), 5.

²⁴ Ibid. , 4.

²⁵ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, VII: 416.

²⁶ Ibid. , 331-334.

²⁷ Rose, "Christ Experience in Athmanuthapam," 274.

that Jesus had followed him in his trial like a Father and whispered into his heart that He is a good Father as well as a good Mother for him.²⁸ Again he writes, “Like unto the mother who nourishes her children with milk even while they are asleep, or are unable to express in words their hunger and thirst, you are looking after our needs everyday.”²⁹

A Christian finds in Jesus the qualities of a Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, Friend etc. Jesus is the only trustworthy person whom all can depend on for ever. He will protect them and will keep them as His own. Chavara presents Jesus as his Father and mother from his own experience. He conveys this message to his people in order to invite them to become closer and closer to Jesus and to experience His unconditional love and care as a Father and mother.

3.1.4 Jesus Christ- Son of God and Son of the Virgin

Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God. He is the Almighty God both divine and human. Chavara expresses this revealed truth as follows:

“The son of God the angel placed
In the mother’s arm I long to see.”³⁰

Jesus, the Son of God is also the Son of the Virgin. About the Nativity of God Chavara says:

“The Nativity of God the highest
From Mary, the virgin, I long to see”³¹

Chavara explains it again:

God almighty, the fountain of all goodness
The King of Kings, Omniscient Lord of All

²⁸ Cf. Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, VII: 343-347.

²⁹ Chavara, *The Letters*, 86.

³⁰ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, III: 27-28.

³¹ Ibid. , 9-10.

The Second Person of the Holy Trinity
The Lord borne by the Queen of the world
The Blessed Mother bearing in her womb, a child
Of nine months, on a journey tedious and sore
Alas, my Queen, Spotless Virgin mild...³²

Thus, Chavara brings forth the truth that Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, is born from a virgin. In this way he confirmed the mystery of divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

3.1.5 Titles of Jesus Christ

Paul Kalluveettil, in his article, *Christian Portrait of a Bhakta Yogi* says, “The divine name is the mystical bridge between the finite and Infinite; it links up the human with the Divine.”³³ In the writings of Chavara, he uses different names for Jesus. He was in love with Jesus and finds joy in singing His praises by attributing to Him new and new titles.³⁴ For example, we will see here some of the titles he used for Jesus in his epic poem *Compunction of the Soul*. They can be classified into two sections: the titles which express the Divinity of Jesus Christ and those which express His humanity.

3.1.5.1 Titles Which Express the Divinity of Christ

Chavara uses many titles to express the divinity of Jesus Christ. Some of them are given below:

The God- Man (*CS*³⁵ XI: 380); God of gods (*CS* II: 214); Creator (*CS* II: 223); Seat of Mercy (*CS* II:241); Lord (*CS* II: 241); Master (*CS* II:241); Lord of all (*CS* VII: 53); Omniscient (*CS* VII: 53); The Author of all (*CS* VII: 55); The Creator Supreme

³² Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, IV: 29-35.

³³ Paul Kalluveettil, “Christian Portrait of a Bhakta Yogi,” *Journal of St. Thomas Christians* 16 (January- March 2005): 48.

³⁴ Cf. Ibid.

³⁵ *CS* is an abbreviation used for *Compunction of the Soul*

(CS VII: 93); Immaculate Treasure of Grace (CS VII: 141); Fount of Mercy (CS VII: 256); Eternal Son of God (CS VII: 256); Co-existent with the Lord of all (CS VII: 259); The Second Person of the Holy Trinity (CS IV: 31); God of the Universe (CS VII: 51); God Almighty (CS IV: 29); The fountain of all goodness (CS IV: 29); King of Kings (CS IV: 30); Unaffected (CS III Supplement: 19); Son of Almighty God (CS III Supplement: 1); Seat of Compassion (CS III Supplement: 3); Source of all treasure (CS III Supplement: 7); The Perfect (CS III Supplement: 48); Lord of the Gospel (CS III: 97); The Lord of goodness (CS III: 99); Son of the Most High (CS VI: 41); The only begotten Son of God the Father (CS VI: 45); God's own Son the Prime Prince (CS VI: 76); The Lord of Justice (CS VI: 155); The Lord of Heaven (CS IV: 159); The Prince of the Earth (CS V: 117); The Lord of the stars of the Firmament (CS III Supplement: 51); Redeemer of humankind (CS III: 6); Sovereign of mankind (CS VII: 260) etc.

3.1.5.2 Titles Which Express the Humanity of Christ

The following are some of the titles Chavara uses to denote the humanity of Jesus Christ:

Royal son of David (CS VII: 260); Virgin God of body Immaculate (CS VII: 428); Son of man (CS III Supplement: 17); Behold the man (CS VII: 507); Jewish lion cub (CS II: 196); Little Prince (CS III Supplement: 10); God Emmanuel (CS III Supplement: 63); God Incarnate (CS III: 3); Good Shepherd (CS III: 97); Jesus (CS VII: 304); Christ (CS XII: 55); Loving son (CS IX The Mother's Grief: 203); The Healer (CS VII: 359); Child (CS IX The Mother's Grief: 76); The Babe (CS V: 95); Our Elder Brother (CS II: 172) etc.³⁶

³⁶ Cf. Kalluveettil, "Christian Portrait of a *Bhakta Yogi*," 49-53.

3.1.6 Cross- Divine Instrument of Salvation

Chavara accepted Cross in his life as a symbol of his love towards Jesus the Messiah. He presents Jesus' longing to have a deep sleep in the Cross in order to offer his self-sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of the humanity³⁷ through the following words:

O Cross, Beloved, open your arms wide,
And in your loving embrace quickly close me
Let me present before my Father beloved
The sons of men, the loved ones of the world.

From atop your altars let me offer
Myself as a gift of love and reparation
O how long have I been waiting in love
With zeal have I tarried, oh, how long

To rest in peace, in perfect comfort and love
From Heaven's abode, my heart did wish,
You the aim of my descent from above
For this did I accept, my sorry flesh.³⁸

Chavara says that the Cross is the strongest weapon against Satan. It is the key to open the gate of heaven. It is through the Cross that the whole humanity has become one tribe of Jesus. Cross is the only means of salvation and that is the way of Jesus, the Messiah. Through His death on the Cross Jesus made the whole humanity as children of God. So the whole humanity has become brothers and sisters in Him.³⁹

³⁷ Cf. Rose, "Christ Experience in Athmanuthapam," 278.

³⁸ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, VIII: 13-24.

³⁹ Cf. Ibid. , 25-40.

For Chavara Christ is the Cross and the Cross is Christ.⁴⁰ We cannot experience Christ without the Cross. It is the Cross that makes us identify ourselves with Christ.⁴¹ So he shows the way of the Cross in order to become one with Christ.⁴²

3.1.7 Awareness as a Sinner- for Salvific Experience

The awareness of sinfulness leads us to the path of salvation. Only those who have this awareness can accept this and confess this to the Lord, Our Saviour Jesus Christ and thereby can experience the salvation in Him.⁴³ Throughout the writings of Chavara we can see this concept. Chavara, as the representative of all the sinners, is asking pardon to Jesus the Lord. Here, there are some examples:

“O God- man, my master, seat of mercy, Lord
Look with eyes of pity on me a sinner”⁴⁴

“Time sped, this sinner grew callous again,
Through hateful malice heaped sin upon sin!”⁴⁵

“All deformed, the blind, the lame and the dumb,
Would revile me and my ugly soul!
While to son-ship divine you raised me
The grace I cast away, and turned a devil
The spotless garment, Baptism bestowed on me
That I beacon light would shine for those
In my wake, who walked, a sot that I am,
I rudely sailed and turned all virtue to vice.”⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Cf. Hariett, “Athmanuthapam, Thiriyalinteyum Onnaitheeralinteyum Kadha,” CMI- CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, *Chavara:Prathibhayum Prabhayum* (Kochi: CMI- CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, 1996), 24.

⁴¹ Cf. Rose, “Christ Experience in Athmanuthapam,” 279.

⁴² Cf. Hariett, 24.

⁴³ Cf. Sophy, “Sabha Snehiyaya Chavarayachan,” *Kathioli* 30 (February 1990): 45.

⁴⁴ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, II: 241-242.

⁴⁵ Ibid. , 289-290.

⁴⁶ Ibid. , 345-352.

God is the fount of mercy. So trust in this mercy of God is also important for salvation. So Chavara says, “Your Father is so bounteous as to forgive and forget every ingratitudes of yours. You are sure to be reinstated to your former filial status and privileges.”⁴⁷ God is the source of all graces. Chavara conveys the message that God became man in order to save the humanity from sin and to raise them to the level of children of God, where they experience the true salvation.

3.2 Mariology

Chavara’s Marian vision is ultimately based on the Bible, Church teachings and his own personal experience.⁴⁸ A good part of his poetic work *Āthmānuthāpam* contains the glories of Mary.⁴⁹ Through these Chavara brings forth a good Mariology to us. The teachings of the Church related to Mary, Mary’s role in the redemptive work of Jesus, role of Mary in the Church and Mary as our mediatrix etc. are the themes that we analyse from his writings.

3.2.1 Teachings of the Church on Mary

Mary is the Mother of all. She is also the way to Jesus. So Chavara shows much interest to present almost all the teachings on Mary. Mary is Immaculate. The Immaculate conception of Mary is presented by Chavara in the following way:

“The Great God rend’ring her IMMACULATE
Raised her for begetting Him.”⁵⁰

He says again:

“Thus from the Day of Conception
Without a single moment’s loss

⁴⁷ Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 4.

⁴⁸ Cf. Lisieux Therese, “Marian Vision of Athmanuthapam,” in Paul Kalluveetttil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds., *The Lord of Heaven and Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, CMI* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 292.

⁴⁹ Cf. Panthaplackal, “The Ecclesial Dimension in Chavara’s Endeavours,” 201.

⁵⁰ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, XI: 205-206.

Till she was sixty- seven
When overcome with zeal...”⁵¹

Mary is the Mother of God. Chavara writes:

“The Blessed Son of God of glory
Wishing to raise His Mother divine”⁵²

She is also the Mother of the Church. Chavara presents this truth by saying,

“So as to grant rare graces in love
The Church’s Regime she took to herself”⁵³

Chavara describes the Assumption and crowning of Mary by the Holy Trinity in heaven in his own meditative way as follows:

Oh, you, the mother of mankind and my mother
Thy son our King, and you august queen
The God, the Spirit, in my sorrows my solace
His loving spouse, oh you, forever my queen.

The Triune God severally uttered these words
And crowned her with the bright diadem of glory
Now came the loud acclamation from the realm
Of Heaven, to affirm this honour, eternal

Our mistress beloved, queen of all the world
Queen of us all, elevated above all, supreme

Joyously reign over all, for all eternity
Rule over us forever this greatness hold!
Singled out, the prime from among mankind
Your duty performed aright to attain the fold.⁵⁴

Chavara says Mary was sinless at birth and hence there was no sign of decay in her body after her death also.⁵⁵ Her eternal virginity is also presented in this way:

⁵¹ Ibid. , 261-264.

⁵² Ibid. , XII: 18-19.

⁵³ Ibid. , XI: 477-478.

⁵⁴ Ibid. , XIII: 41-54.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ibid. , XII: 226-227.

“A virgin before and after conception
Chaste at the conception and
Chaste for ever...”⁵⁶

With regard to the virginal conception of Mary he again writes:

“Quietly as the Sun’s ray penetrates glass
To the virgin, a son was born!”⁵⁷

In this way, very inspiringly Chavara presents the teachings of the Church on Mary in his writings.

3.2.2 Mary- Mother and Disciple

Mary is both a mother and a disciple for Jesus. In *Āthmānuthāpam* V: 76-80 the child Jesus invites his mother as a disciple to follow him. Chavara presents here the double role of Mary as mother as well as disciple. In the poem the infant Jesus is telling her to follow him and to show the world that she is his mother. Mary is the first one in the Kingdom of God fulfilling the will of God the Father. By looking after and also following the way of Jesus, Mary fulfilled her role. She showed the world that she is the mother of the saviour, Jesus Christ.⁵⁸ The child born from Mary is her creator as well as her son.⁵⁹ So Mary as the mother of Jesus, looked after Him, and at the same time she followed Him all throughout His life as a true disciple.

3.2.3 Mary Fulfils the Word of God

Chavara uses several quotations from the Bible in his writings. He did not forget to say that the Word of God is fulfilled in Mary. In *Compunction of the Soul* IV: 1-12 Chavara states that Gen.3:14-15 is fulfilled in Mary. He describes it in this way:

⁵⁶ Ibid. , 208-210.

⁵⁷ Ibid. , V: 49-50.

⁵⁸ Cf. Therese, “Marian Vision of Athmanuthapam,” 284.

⁵⁹ Cf. Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, II: 223.

Mother benign, O crown of woman kind
Through you was God's promise to man fulfilled.
Since Eve, the first parent, the mother of all
Was deluded by the vile serpent's vice

.....
.....

"The son of her, your head shall crush
Under foot without fail!" This curse
Found fulfilment in you, Hence for all
Ages to come, generations will hail you 'Blessed.'⁶⁰

Chavara confirms this when he describes the Crucifixion of Jesus. He says that the devil (serpent) had doubt that who will be the lady who is going to crush his head. But when he heard the three words ("Today you shall be safe with me in Paradise," "Woman behold your son" and "Son behold your mother") of Jesus from the Cross he became sure that this was Jesus Christ and this lady is the one who would crush his head.⁶¹

Chavara compares Mary with the Ark of the Covenant also. In 1Kings 8:6 we read that after the construction of the Jerusalem temple king Solomon placed the Ark of the Covenant in it. This Ark of the Covenant in the temple is compared with Jesus in the womb of Mary. Chavara writes:

In this tabernacle he placed the Tablet
Inscribed with the commandments divine
So in your sacred womb immaculate
The Adorable Deity calmly dwells.⁶²

Only the chief priest was allowed to approach and touch the Ark of the Covenant. But in the New Testament God is very near to all. The contrast is like this:

⁶⁰ Ibid. , IV: 1-12.

⁶¹ Cf. Ibid. ,VIII: 237-250.

⁶² Ibid. , IV: 45-48.

Even to approach the Ark and to bear it
None but the Chief Priest was granted leave
But Lord, your loving mother, on the contrast
On her bare feet, walks across thorns and dust⁶³

King Solomon placed the Ark of the Covenant at the Jerusalem temple. Here the new Ark of the Covenant, Jesus is placed in the womb of Mary. Thus the Holy Mother became the Holy Temple bearing the Ark of the Covenant.⁶⁴

3.2.4 Mary in the Mystery of Christ

In the seventh and the eighth section of the *Āthmānuthāpam* Chavara very clearly describes Mary's participation in the Mystery of Christ. All through the way of Jesus, Mary was with him. On several occasions Chavara portrays Mary in prayer. The eighth section describes the journey of Jesus for his final glory. Here, Chavara says that it is because of the prayer of Mary that Simon came forward to carry the Cross and helped Jesus. When she desired to see the face of Jesus, the angels paved the way for her.⁶⁵ With unceasing prayer Mary followed Jesus on His way. In the ninth section Chavara describes the last stages of Jesus' Crucifixion. Here also Chavara makes Mary to consult with the angels on the burial of the sacred body of Jesus. It is because of the prayer of Mary that the soldier, who pierced Jesus' side with a spear (Jn.19: 34), got his eye sight back.⁶⁶ Like this Chavara presents Mary's participation in the Mystery of Christ in a very special manner. The next section of *Āthmānuthāpam* is called the *Mother's Grief*. It is the description of Mary's mental agony. Mary recalls all the scenes of Crucifixion of Jesus in her mind and which leads her to a great suffering and agony.⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid. , 65-68.

⁶⁴ Cf. Therese, "Marian Vision of Athmanuthapam," 287.

⁶⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 287-288.

⁶⁶ Cf. Chavarayachan, *Āthmānuthāpam*, VIII: 117-128.

⁶⁷ Cf. Ibid. , IX: 17-36.

3.2.5 Mary in the Church

Mary is the Mother of the Church. The relation between Mary and the Church is described in the tenth section onwards in *Āthmānuthāpam*. Chavara describes the scene in which Heavenly Father hands over the Church to the Holy Mother like this:

The Father then approached her
And lovingly said, “My daughter,
Your Son, my beloved Son, the
Church founded on earth by Him
It has so grown in number
I entrust it to your care”⁶⁸

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mary was always in prayer in order to fight against the evils and to protect the sheep of Jesus Christ.⁶⁹ “The Church is a ship that sails through the world ocean.”⁷⁰ Mary extends her help to the Church when it is in darkness and struggle. Through the world of ocean Mary leads the ship, the Church.⁷¹ Chavara makes Mary to comfort the disciples when the ship was in danger. He writes:

He told the mother “Pray to your Son
Fervently now, or else we perish”
Hearing this, She looked at John
And lovingly said, “Fear not my son
Know you, this is the time of struggle
You have to put up a bold fight
For your master; but be assured
None will be lost, He will aid.”⁷²

⁶⁸ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, X: 79-84.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ibid. , 139-140.

⁷⁰ Therese, “Marian Vision of Athmanuthapam,” 291.

⁷¹ Cf. Chavarayachan, *Āthmānuthāpam*, X: 221-412.

⁷² Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, X: 397-404.

Chavara presents Mary as the daughter of the Church too.⁷³ One of the most important visions of Chavara about the Church is the primacy of the Pope. In order to give emphasis on this he uses Mary as the model.⁷⁴ As a daughter of the Church Mary accepts Peter as the leader⁷⁵ and before her Assumption she begs blessings from him.⁷⁶ In this way Mary is well presented in the writings of Chavara as the Mother, the protector and the daughter of the Church. She is the first and the best model in the Church.

3.2.6 Assumption and Glory of Mary

Chavara describes the Assumption and glory of Mary very interestingly. After the service of Mary in the Church she is taken to the fully glorified state.⁷⁷ When it is time for her Assumption the voice heard was “My love ascend now to the skies.”⁷⁸ Chavara gives an elaborate narration of it in the twelfth section of *Āthmānuthāpam*. He narrates well the event of the life of Mary ascends towards heaven. This is because the Holy Spirit lives in her and she is totally submissive to the Holy Trinity. The reason for the death of this Holy Virgin is nothing but pure love. With love she transformed disease and death as nectar on the earth.⁷⁹ Mary is the Queen of the earth and heaven. She is the Queen of the whole humankind. She is crowned in heaven as the Queen. The crowning of Mary is described as follows:

The Triune God highly pleased

⁷³ Cf. Chavarayachan, *Āthmānuthāpam*, XI: 401.

⁷⁴ Cf. Thomas Panthaplackal, “Chavarayude Thirusabha Darshanam,” CMI-CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, *Chavara: Vyakthiyum Sidhiyum* (Kochi: CMI-CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, 1994), 118.

⁷⁵ Cf. Chavarayachan, *Āthmānuthāpam*, XII: 23-28.

⁷⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 105-118.

⁷⁷ Cf. Therese, “Marian Vision of Athmanuthapam,” 288.

⁷⁸ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, X: 37.

⁷⁹ Cf. Chavarayachan, *Āthmānuthāpam*, XII: 249-258.

The Father the chief of the Trinity
A sound proclamation made
For angels and celestial beings to hear
Behold the foremost of our creation
This is my daughter, know ye for certain
Henceforth unto eternity shall reign
A spotless Virgin crowned as Queen!⁸⁰

3.2.7 Mary as Mediatrix

In Chavara's vision Mary is Mother as well as Mediatrix. "Her motherly affection towards humanity is the foundation for the mediatorship."⁸¹ Chavara narrates as Jesus is saying to Mary like this:

And once you have entered Heaven
To absolve these from stain of sin
And be the succour of men who sin
Your duty would be to pray for them.⁸²

Chavara presents Mary as the Mediatrix of all. He had a strong faith in her intercession. We can see plenty of examples in his writings. He did everything with the help of Mary. Some of the words which show his solid trust in her are given below:

"You alone my hope, none else have I"⁸³

"Beset with terror, my heart would be sore my Lady
Grant me your mercy then, oh fill me with solace"⁸⁴

"O benign mistress succour me, I pray
At the hour of my death, save me with care"⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, XII: 309-316.

⁸¹ Therese, "Marian Vision of Athmanuthapam," 291.

⁸² Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, XI: 365-368.

⁸³ Ibid. , VI: 206.

⁸⁴ Ibid. , The Concluding Prayer: 19-20.

⁸⁵ Ibid. , 75-76.

“Grant me succour, my mother, my hope”⁸⁶

“Grant me your grace my mother divine, my queen”⁸⁷

In this way Chavara expresses his trust and faith in her. The intercession of Mary makes the impossible things possible. Through Mary everything is possible. She is the best mediatrix for the humankind before Christ. Chavara narrates the efficaciousness of Mary’s intercessory prayer as follows:

And near the place of her death, then, were seen
A man and a couple of women who had earlier died

They approached the Lord their fate to learn, for
No mercy they could hope, for in sin they’d died
The Mother benign in sympathy interceded
To forgive them and the prayer was at once granted.

The Mother’s prayer caused the verdict to be changed
And back to the world they went, where through sorrow
Forgiveness they found and on their death salvation!
The sick who came to the cenacle, were granted health.

And absolution from sin, each and everyone
And the virtuous ones who were yet in purgatory
Cleansed of their stains, the mother raised to bless
These and other benefits, oh, indescribable.⁸⁸

3.2.8 Names of Mary

With reverence and great affection Chavara uses many names to call Mary. Some of these names are related to God the Father, some related to Jesus Christ, some to Holy Spirit, to the Church and some to the world.⁸⁹ A few examples are given below:

⁸⁶ Ibid. , VII:213.

⁸⁷ Ibid. , The Concluding Prayer: 8.

⁸⁸ Ibid. , XIII: 11-24.

⁸⁹ Cf. Elizabeth William, “Maria Bhakthanaya Chavara,” CMI- CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, *Chavara: Vyakthiyum Sidhiyum* (Kochi: CMI- CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, 1994), 78.

Mother of the Creator of all (*CS XI*: 333); Mother of God (*CHF*⁹⁰, 3); Mother of the noble Son (*CS IX* The Mother's Grief: 191); Mother seat of mercy (*CS IX* The Mother's Grief: 198); Morning Star (*CS II*: 272); Mistress benevolent (*CS VII*:434); Queen Mother (*CS X*:111); Refuge of sinners (*CHF*, 3); Woman (*CS VIII*:242); Mother (*CS VIII*:243); The noble maiden (*CS VI*: 47); Spouse with a crown of stars and a moon at her feet (*CS VI*: 300); The Lady who would crush his head (*CS VIII*: 250); Hand-maid (*CS XII*: 32); Beloved Spouse (*CS XI*: 423); Queen of the world (*CS IV*: 32); Queen of the triple world (*CS IV*: 172); Ocean's star (*CS VI*: 54); Star of the sea (*CS VI*: 36); Queen of Virgins (*CS II*:221); Mother benign (*CS IV*: 1); Crown of womankind (*CS IV*: 1); Mother merciful (*CS IV*: 82) etc.

3.3 On Sacraments

Christian life is nourished by Sacraments. Chavara was very much convinced about this. He was always faithful to the Sacramental life and he gave instructions to his people on it in different occasions. We can find out his teachings on Sacraments especially on Baptism, Holy Eucharist and Priesthood, in his writings.

3.3.1 Baptism

Chavara lived as a Spirit filled person because he was very much faithful to the Sacrament of Baptism.⁹¹ Chavara's teaching on Baptism we can see mainly in his *Āthmānuthāpam*. He remembers the day of Baptism as follows:

O Fount of Mercy, in your crystal streams of grace
Was my soul once cleansed and made spotless fair
Beauteous, bright, bedecked in gems of virtue
Through my Baptism, a boon, a day of days!⁹²

⁹⁰ *CHF* is an abbreviation used for *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*.

⁹¹ Cf. Quriaqos Elijah Vadaketh, *Chavara Athyatmikatha* (Kottayam: Denha Services, 2005), 19.

⁹² Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 33-36.

The Sacrament of Baptism cleanses us of the original sin and all other sins. It removes the fears from our hearts and fills it with God's graces abundantly. It is through Baptism we became the children of God. It makes us the inheritants of heaven. With this conviction Chavara writes:

"Through Baptism's grace, you made me your cherished son,
And showed me Heaven's joys to tend me grow"⁹³

Chavara compares the graces that we receive in Baptism to a spotless garment.⁹⁴ According to him the call to Christian life through Baptism is a beautiful gift from God out of His mercy. Through this, the merciful God makes possible the restoration of divine sonship to the humanity. So this grace-filled day is the best day in the life of a Christian. Chavara says:

The fountain of grace, flushed forth from my soul
On that grace-filled day, Heaven rejoiced
As my name was writ on Eternity's page
Never so blessed a day has seen my life.⁹⁵

When the sacred water of Baptism falls on one's head he/she profess his/her faith in God. It chases all the powers of Satan from them. The lighted candle which is given to them symbolises that they should give good model to others through their virtuous life.⁹⁶ But, Chavara says that when they become unfaithful to this grace of God they will lose their divine sonship and they will become the slaves of Satan.⁹⁷ So, Christian life is a life in the grace of God. It is a life where we see God as our Father and we, His children. God is our love, joy, breath, food, drink and everything. So Chavara writes:

You my love, my joy and all my good fortune

⁹³ Ibid. , 41-42.

⁹⁴ Cf. Ibid. , II: 349.

⁹⁵ Ibid. , 111-114.

⁹⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 147-156.

⁹⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 135-138.

If not with you, how could I live my life
My very breath, my food, my drink
What solace have I save in you!⁹⁸

3.3.2 Holy Eucharist

The Sacrament of Baptism finds its realization in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. Holy Eucharist is the centre of Christian life.⁹⁹ In Chavara's life also the Holy Eucharist was the centre of his spirituality and prayer¹⁰⁰ and all his visions and missions. About the presence of God in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist he writes as follows:

The Holy of Holies was only a prototype of the real sanctuary. Where the Son of the Eternal Father dwells all through day and night in the Tabernacle, hiding all His power and majesty in the form of bread.... O my God, you have deigned to invite me to your august Presence in the holy sacrament of the altar.¹⁰¹

Holy Eucharist is a sign of God's great love for the humankind. He sent His only Son and this Son gave them His body and blood for their food and drink. He offered Himself as a victim on Calvary for their redemption. So Chavara's conviction is that the human persons need to live always keeping in mind His sacred passion and death and perform their duties until their death.¹⁰² In order to perform the Sacred Liturgy, it is necessary to have the spiritual holiness. As for their examination of conscience Chavara asks, "How you have behaved in the house of the Lord, around the altar, a place most holy and sacred. The Seraphim and hosts of angels of different

⁹⁸ Ibid. , 143-146.

⁹⁹ Cf. Joseph Kanjiramattam, "Kaudashikajeevitham Chavarayil," CMI-CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, *Chavara: Vyakthiyum Sidhiyum* (Kochi: CMI-CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, 1994), 36.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Thomas Kochumuttam, "A Contemplative in Action," in Paul Kalluveettil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds. , *The Lord of Heaven and Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, CMI* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 160.

¹⁰¹ Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 15.

¹⁰² Cf. Ibid. , 21.

orders bow trembling in adoration. With that devotion are you ascending the altar day by day to perform the sacred liturgy.”¹⁰³

Chavara explains the real presence of the Son of God in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in the following way:

In the old dispensation when rams and oxen were offered in sacrifice at the altar, a little carelessness on the part of the priest was punished very severely. Fire descended from heaven and consumed everything. The priest fell dead. But here on this altar it is not ox or doves that is killed and offered in sacrifice, but the Son of the eternal Father who by a single word called into being everything and who by a single word is able to annihilate everything. You touch with your hands his sacred body. You receive with your heart his sacred body and blood. Remember then how pure should be your hands and how clean should your heart be!¹⁰⁴

Chavara says that the Son of God comes through the Holy Eucharist and lives in human persons day and night in order to illumine their eyes and to comfort and console them. He forgives their sins and trespasses and heals their soul. By His body and blood He feeds and strengthens them so that they may successfully fight their enemies and withstand his onslaught. So for the Christians, the Sacrament of Eucharist is a great privilege from God.¹⁰⁵ Chavara wished to remain always in this divine presence and he wanted others also to be like this. So he wrote to the sisters: “I lock up your hearts in the tabernacle of Jesus. For you, I have locked up my heart there. Stay there until the day of the resurrection.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Ibid. , 25-26.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. , 26.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 29.

¹⁰⁶ Chavara, *The Letters*, 85.

3.3.3 Priesthood

By the Sacrament of Priesthood a person is made the possession of God.¹⁰⁷ Chavara enjoyed this possessiveness by God in his priestly life. So he had a strong conviction about this Sacrament of Priesthood. With regard to the aim of the call to priestly life, he says that it is “to follow the footsteps of the Lord in sacrifice, abnegation, carrying the cross, working zealously for one’s own sanctification and the sanctification of others.”¹⁰⁸ Again he says, “He chose you from out of thousands. There were many who were more worthy than you. Yet, wonder of wonders, He chose you, called you to His home, endowed you with many gifts of body and spirit.”¹⁰⁹

The priests, by their vocation, need not only to work for their own salvation but also of their neighbours. Such being the case, they should not be negligent and careless and inattentive in their sacred duties. That is, they must be very diligent and careful in saying Mass and their recitation of the Canonical hours should not go mechanical.¹¹⁰ Therefore, Chavara instructs the priests to live up to their sacred calling. He writes:

But dear brothers be aware of His sentence of justice until the hour of justice. He will remain silent. He will not argue or protect. He is at your command, He will allow you to touch Him, He will come to your heart, He will go wherever you take Him. O my dear brother, He will not mind now in whatever manner you and I ascend the altar. Now He will not be angry. He is patient and full of forgiveness. Remember there is a limit to His patience. Long suffering as His patience is His wrath will be hard. Therefore examine consciously whether you have lived up to your sacred calling.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Paulachan Kochappilly, “The Ethical Legacy of Chavara for Our Times,” in Paul Kalluveettil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds. , *The Lord of Heaven and Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, CMI* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 238.

¹⁰⁸ Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 25.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. , 27.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 25.

¹¹¹ Ibid. , 26.

Chavara was very strict about the holiness of the priestly life. By using the words of Teresa of Avila he says, “It is far better if priests were more afraid of venial sin rather than being afraid of the Devil. Because venial sin will bring about more ruin than all the combined effort of all the devils of hell.”¹¹² Again he reminds Saint Chrysostom’s word and says:

A priest must be more afraid of venial sin than mortal sin. For, if he happens to fall in a mortal sin, he will get frightened and make reconciliation with God. But in the case of venial sins he may not mind much. And this will lead him to commit venial sins without any qualm of conscience. This habit will eventually lead him to be less afraid of mortal sins.¹¹³

Chavara says that in priestly life there is no middle way- either God or the world. Their life should not oscillate between God and the pleasures of the world.¹¹⁴ The pleasures of the world will abandon them soon. But they will realize their foolishness only on their death-bed.¹¹⁵ Hence Chavara instructs the priests to listen to the silent voice of the Lord in their hearts and be constant in their daily meditation, examination of conscience, weekly confession and spiritual reading.¹¹⁶

3.4 On Religious Life

Chavara gives instruction to the formation of the religious too. He says, “The purpose of the religious life in short is to love the Lord whole- heartedly and follow Him in His footsteps, bringing your neighbour also to Him.”¹¹⁷ In order to be perfect in this life he instructs on the call to religious life, religious vows, discipline, religious

¹¹² Ibid. , 30.

¹¹³ Ibid. , 31.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 32.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 33.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. , 25.

life in Christ etc. So we will see here, some of his important teachings with regard to these themes.

3.4.1 Religious Life- God's Call

The initiative to the call to religious life is always coming from God Himself. In the Gospel of John we read, “You did not choose me but I chose you” (Jn. 15:16). Chavara was convinced about this truth and he writes:

By the special grace of God we are called to be members of the Congregation, dear to the Mother of God. It is as true as the fact that this material on which I write, is truly paper. So too this call we have received was ordained by God Himself and not through any human agency.¹¹⁸

Again he writes:

Beloved brethren, this humble Congregation of ours is not man- made. You are witness to the truth that God has nurtured it with genuine care and helped it to grow.... If we forget our holy vocation and neglect the sacred duties of our state and fail in humility, charity, religious modesty and genuine devotion and are satisfied with valuing them only in spirit and words and not in deeds, within a short time, all these houses fall to ruin.¹¹⁹

Chavara knew the cost of religious life and gives instructions in order to be always thankful to God's ineffable gift of this call. It is not our will that we become priests or religious. But now we are religious. Chavara says, “It is God's will that is being accomplished.”¹²⁰

3.4.2 Religious Vows

To denote the religious vows- poverty, obedience and chastity- Chavara uses the words humility, obedience and charity respectively. Humility is the basis of

¹¹⁸ Chavara, *The Letters*, 70.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. , 61.

¹²⁰ Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1.

poverty and love is the basis of chastity.¹²¹ Chavara says, “The significant mark of a true religious is total negation of their self-will and perfect obedience as though he had no eyes nor ears of his own.”¹²² There should be real charity among the members of the communities. He says, “All must be like the members of one family, children born to, nursed and brought up by the same mother. Never let this love weaken, but let it grow stronger from day to day.”¹²³ In the beginning it may be difficult to practise the virtue of obedience. But after some time we will feel that this is the right attitude. One who practises perfect obedience will enjoy the heavenly peace here itself. Chavara writes to his brethren, “If we having been called by God, had joined the monastery to live according to our own wills obeying only the superiors whom we like, then our behaviour is no better than that of the Unbelievers. If it were our wish to live as we like, why did we choose this vocation?”¹²⁴

Our monasteries should be mirrors of virtues and assembly of holy people.¹²⁵ We must see the superior as the Vicar of Christ and his words as those from Christ.¹²⁶ When all are faithful to practise these virtues, our religious houses become a mini heaven.¹²⁷ In Chavara’s vision we come here not because of “hunger or desperate living circumstances in the world. We could have enjoyed the best of comforts, had we been in the world. But we have, of our own will, renounced our parents and our

¹²¹ Cf. Lisieux Therese, “Chavarakkathukalile Sannyasa Darshanam,” CMI- CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, *Chavara: Prathibhayum Prabhayum* (Kochi: CMI- CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, 1996), 182.

¹²² Chavara, *The Letters*, 70.

¹²³ Ibid. , 71.

¹²⁴ Ibid. , 64.

¹²⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 62.

¹²⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 63.

¹²⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 71.

wealth to come hither. Now if we forsake the Lord through our negligence and our indolence, what a great mistake it would be, what madness.”¹²⁸

3.4.3 Religious Discipline

Chavara gives much importance to a disciplined religious life. He says, “The strength of monastery does not consist in the thickness of its walls, but in the virtue and the religious zeal of the monks who dwell in them.”¹²⁹ He instructs that each one must do the responsibilities entrusted to each one and must take care not to waste any time.¹³⁰ The newly ordained young priests are the highest hope of the monasteries. But their undisciplined life caused inexpressible grief to Chavara. So he writes:

These young brothers who received a lot of favours from God and passed through such a long period of careful training, instead of living as models of humility, piety and obedience, as soon as they come out of the novitiate, start leading as unrestrained life forgetting the examples of holiness they have seen and the counsels of virtue they heard.¹³¹

According to Chavara there are some who are ever pretending to be beset with a thousand pre-occupations reluctant to obey, ignorant of the virtue of humility, living in the wake of their own wills and stubbornness. He adds that they could have found happiness if they had been seeking the will of God instead of desiring to satisfy their own wills.¹³² For him a happy community is a disciplined community, where we could find charity, humility, neatness and promptness.¹³³

¹²⁸ Ibid. , 66.

¹²⁹ Ibid. , 65.

¹³⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 82.

¹³¹ Ibid. , 64.

¹³² Cf. Ibid. , 63.

¹³³ Cf. Ibid. , 67.

3.4.4 Return to the Original Spirit

Return to the original spirit is the spirituality of the Scripture. In the book of Revelation we read, “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first” (Rev. 2: 4-5). Chavara is injecting this spirituality also. He wrote to the members of his Congregation:

Where we expected grapes, we see thistles, yielding raw roots. Of late we have been observing in you the tendency to consider humility, obedience, charity, religious modesty etc. as virtues not to be practised in your daily and ordinary life, but to be observed only by very holy and exceptional souls. Without the slightest fear of God or of prick of conscience you do things quite contrary to these virtues, thus reducing these monasteries founded by God and willed by Him to be mirrors of virtues and assembly of holy people, into an association of self-willed stewards and business administrators. You seem to consider it a disgrace to engage yourselves in holy conversation on spiritual matters and think that those who observe religious modesty and walk in piety are fools and idiots.¹³⁴

Chavara in his letter reminds the members of his Congregation very roughly about their undisciplined life and invites them to come back to the original spirit of their Congregation. He reminds them the need of observing holy silence, obedience, the purity of their own rooms etc. He mentions also about a self-disciplined life, meditation and prayer.¹³⁵ He wishes that the members of the religious communities must be filled with virtues and religious zeal. They have to be models for other generations also. That is why he is injecting the spirituality of ‘return to the original spirit.’ It is clear in his words:

We are the progenitors of the monasteries here. We are the corner stones. After half a century our followers, while holding up our name and our deeds as witnesses will follow our foot-steps and in all probability, may accomplish only less than what we do today. I am afraid they are not going to improve upon our achievements.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Ibid. , 61-62.

¹³⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 62.

¹³⁶ Ibid. , 65.

Hence, Chavara says, “As was reminded by our Lord, our spirits are awake but our flesh is weak, it is necessary that we awaken from time to time and renew our zeal.”¹³⁷

3.4.5 Life in Christ and Spousal Mysticism

Religious life is a life in Jesus Christ. They are the queens and spouses of Jesus Christ. Chavara writes to the sisters, “O! queens and spouses of our Lord and King Jesus Christ, the state of life you have embraced is indeed great and praiseworthy. The terrestrial empresses will feel jealous of you.”¹³⁸ So this is a very special call to live for Christ, in Christ and with Christ. Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians says, “The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord” (1Cor. 7: 32). Paul says again, “And the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit” (1Cor. 7: 34). By understanding this Chavara also writes, “Learn the art of loving Jesus Christ. Stay constantly in His presence. Walk along with Him. Converse with Him continuously.”¹³⁹ He says that Jesus our Lord is always with us with the sole desire of pleasing us.¹⁴⁰

For a religious the relationship with Jesus is above all a spousal relationship. Chavara writes, “Consider how sweet is the voice of your loving spouse. He is vigilantly watching in your hearts, jealously, lest you love any one more than Him, lovingly looking to all your needs.”¹⁴¹ This kind of spousal relationship can be

¹³⁷ Ibid. , 67.

¹³⁸ Ibid. , 77.

¹³⁹ Ibid. , 82.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. , 83.

achieved by the constant company of Jesus. Jesus is always waiting for us and we have to give room for Him in the solitude of our hearts. Chavara explains this mystical union as follows:

When a soul delights in solitude, Jesus Christ will come to converse with it in solitude and begin communing with it. At first you will not understand the language. Then it is that the Lord will lead you to the wine- cellar and pour out some wine for you- a little at first. In course of time you will begin to understand the language. When your spouse sees that you understand His speech, he will speak more and more distinctly and show you the magnitude of His love. Then the bride will love more and the bridegroom will rejoice over it and adorn her with ornaments. Thus commences the divine union. Then on there will be nothing to fear.¹⁴²

3.5 Stages of Meditation

Prayer is not only the exercise of the lips, but it is an experience of knowing God. Chavara had this idea on prayer.¹⁴³ “It is an experience which affected the entire life and penetrated the depths of relationship.”¹⁴⁴ Prayer is a total surrender before the voice of God. It includes listening to His Words, its interiorization and its application to life.¹⁴⁵ That is prayer should reach the level of meditation. According to Chavara, “Meditation is a free and friendly colloquy with God.”¹⁴⁶ He describes the way of meditation as a “straight way to the summit of perfection and the means not to tumble down from the heights.”¹⁴⁷ In order to achieve this stage of meditation Chavara describes four steps: reading, solitude, meditative prayer and meditation.

¹⁴² Ibid. , 85.

¹⁴³ Cf. Chavarayachan, *Āthmānuthāpam*, I: 53-54.

¹⁴⁴ Jossy, ed. , *CMC in the Shadow of the Most High*, 61.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Jose Frank, “Chavara: Daivathinte Manushyan: Chavarappithavinte Prarthananubhavathileckoru Ethinottam,” John Romeo Pattassery, ed. , *Vazhthappetta Chavarappithavinte Azhamaya Athyamikatha* (Alwaye: Chavara Books and Publications, 1990), 50.

¹⁴⁶ Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 2.

¹⁴⁷ Chavara, *The Letters*, 84.

3.5.1 Reading

In prayer, the conversation begins by God Himself. It is He who establishes relationship and leads to the depths of union. We have only to listen to His Word and to keep our hearts silent and still.¹⁴⁸ In order to attain this solitude Chavara prefers the spiritual reading. He says, “Avoid wasting your time in useless conversation. The time you save after your proper work and recreation should be spent in spiritual reading.”¹⁴⁹ He also suggests the kind of reading which leads to this solitude and prayer. He writes:

Some may like to read light materials, such as news and stories; others may like reading about the holy passion and sufferings of the saints like Theresa, Rosa etc. The first group care more for knowledge and enjoyment, the second group for knowledge and devotion. The latter is the sure way to acquire virtue and to persevere in the same. If you love reading you will love solitude.¹⁵⁰

3.5.2 Solitude

In the book of Deuteronomy we read, “He sustained him in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste; he shielded him, cared for him, guarded him as the apple of his eye” (Deut. 32:10). Desert is the place of silence and solitude. It is in this solitude God comes and speaks to the soul. It is a state of attentive listening of the heart. They can understand even the softest voice of God which whispered in their interior depths of the hearts. When God comes and begins to speak, the person will be able to raise the level of rationalization. This will lead to the levels of love, faith and dedication.¹⁵¹ Chavara says that Jesus will come to converse with and begin

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Jossy, ed. , *CMC in the Shadow of the Most High*, 62.

¹⁴⁹ Chavara, *The Letters*, 85.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Jossy, ed. , *CMC in the Shadow of the Most High*, 63.

communing with the soul which is in solitude.¹⁵² When the conversation starts it will lead the soul to the next stage, that is, meditative prayer.

3.5.3 Meditative Prayer

In the stage of meditative prayer the intimate conversation of the bride with the bridegroom takes place in solitude. It is in this stage, according to Chavara, God is willing to take those who are in intimacy with Him into His wine- cellar. He will give them wine and adorn them with ornaments.¹⁵³ This step can be taken as the leading step to the next stage, meditation.

3.5.4 Meditation

We have seen that according to Chavara meditation is a free and friendly colloquy with God.¹⁵⁴ It is an intimate friendship and love is its basis. Chavara writes:

For, if meditation is a conversation with God, it presupposes a friendship with God. For, when friends sit close to each other, they find enough topics to talk about without cessation. If there is love, conversation goes unlimited. No one need teach either of the two friends how to go on talking. For, the heart has a language of its own. The very close presence of the friend with no utterance of words is quite gratifying and heart- warming.¹⁵⁵

According to Chavara a sinful heart is incompatible with God. The requirement for meditation is that one be united in love with God.¹⁵⁶ Love is the method to learn the art of meditation. Chavara says, “If I bear true love for Jesus, I

¹⁵² Cf. Chavara, *The Letters*, 85.

¹⁵³ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 2.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 3.

will have enough matter to talk with Him. If not, the very feeling of being with Him (togetherness) is rewarding.”¹⁵⁷

Those who reach this stage of meditation feel that they are crossing from one level of spiritual intimacy to another very fast. There the soul will experience the inseparable relationship with God.¹⁵⁸ In order to reach this level Chavara shows Mother Teresa of Avila as our model. Chavara says, “Our Mother Teresa attained the 7th stage. Some of her sisters reached up to the fifth and sixth. We must reach at least the fourth.”¹⁵⁹ That is, Chavara was very particular that everyone including children¹⁶⁰ should reach the fourth stage of meditation.

3.6 Catechesis through the Word of God

Chavara was a gifted interpreter of the Bible. His whole life was an expression of the Word of God and he transformed the Word of God as his own word.¹⁶¹ In his writings he uses plenty of Biblical citations. Some are explicit citations from the Bible and some are implicit overtones of Biblical phrases and the third types are those which are interpretative or hermeneutical texts.¹⁶² Out of these we will see only the hermeneutical texts which Chavara explains and interprets quite interestingly and inspiringly. We will discuss here only three of them, namely, the parable of the wedding banquet, the parable of the Prodigal son and his own interpretation and application of the concept of ‘bosom’ in the Bible.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. , 2.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Jossy, ed. , *CMC in the Shadow of the Most High*, 63.

¹⁵⁹ Chavara, *The Letters*, 85.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Paul Kalluveetttil, “Chavara the Dynamic Hermeneut of the Word,” in Paul Kalluveetttil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds. , *The Lord of Heaven and Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, CMI* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 295.

¹⁶² Cf. Ibid. , 297.

3.6.1 Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Mt. 22:11-14)

In the Gospel of Mathew we find a man who came to the banquet without wearing a wedding garment. The king commanded the attendants to bind him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness. Chavara gives a very personal dimension of this part of the parable. He says:

Why was the man without a wedding garment cast into the outer darkness, bound hand and foot? Did that man have a proper dress to attend the royal feast? Therefore, bear this in mind: not that he was a vagabond, but even without a proper dress on, had he asked for one in all humility, he would certainly have been granted that by the divine generosity. It was his self-reliance and self complacency that threw him to torture.¹⁶³

According to Chavara the king in the parable of the banquet, who invited people, has enough resources to supply for all. But the man who came without the wedding garment did not ask for it. He did not take it as a serious matter. Therefore, he was thrown into the outer darkness. So Chavara gives a personal application to this. He says, “If you are humble enough to ask Him who brought you hither, you will certainly be gifted with the royal robe, i.e., higher degrees of prayer and sanctity.”¹⁶⁴

3.6.2 Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15: 11-32)

The Parable of the Prodigal son is indeed the story of the one who returns to his home and stays with the father. “The Kingdom of God is compared not to the son who squandered the wealth on dissolute living. Rather, Jesus presents the heavenly home as the abode of those converted sinners who have returned to the father.”¹⁶⁵ The repentant and the returned sons never leave the company of the beloved father.

¹⁶³ Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. , 2.

¹⁶⁵ Kalluveettil, “Chavara the Dynamic Hermeneut of the Word,” 302.

But they will spend there in loving gratitude towards the father and will sing the paternal mercies for ever. This is the real picture of a Biblical son of the heavenly father. It is also the symbol of a true disciple of Christ.¹⁶⁶

By giving interpretation to this parable Chavara himself transformed into the Biblical image of an authentic son. It is a turning process. In the first step of this process he decided to go back to his father's house. He started his journey and his approaching is filled with a craving for the immediate presence of the beloved. "Oh, it is a long time since I saw my heavenly Father's face!"¹⁶⁷ He has the pain for the past guilt of disloyalty toward his loving father. When he sees his father is coming to embrace him, he shows his intense yearning for the presence of the father: "Let me fall prostrate at His feet,"¹⁶⁸ "I am bent on clinging to your pierced but live feet until you speak to me words of forgiveness."¹⁶⁹

In the second step of this turning process he wishes to see the face of his loving father. "My father let me raise my eyes. May I lift my ungrateful eyes to your welcome face. Let my eyelids open and the tear drops that brim therein fall unto the earth so that my eyes are cleansed with tears of sorrow."¹⁷⁰ When he raises his eyes he sees the disfigured face of his loving father. He understands that this is because of his misdoings.¹⁷¹

In the third step, he is craving for contemplating the real blissful face of his loving father. "O my God, when am I to see through the beauty of your bejewelled

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. , 5.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. , 6.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Ibid. , 7-8.

eyes and holy face?”¹⁷² He gets the answer immediately. “O my son, you will measure up to that provided you are prepared for a change in yourself.”¹⁷³ He apologises, “O my Lord, from now on, I resolve to die to my own will and submit myself always to your holy will. I seek not to follow anybody’s will except your own.”¹⁷⁴ Thus the relationship with his father gets deeper and deeper. He now wants to be in union with his loving father. He recalls all the sufferings and love of his father towards him.¹⁷⁵

Here Chavara stands out as the real passionate symbol of the returning son, the authentic Biblical son. A returning son is the real disciple of Jesus Christ. He enjoys the eternal happiness in union with Jesus Christ. By personalising this experience Chavara writes:

I hope my own sufferings along with you will take me to the joy of being in union with heavenly spouses. Let me follow in your footsteps with love and courage. I place Mary Magdalene in my stead at the foot of your cross and ascend the cross of the good thief and join him in the earnest supplication: “Lord, remember me when Thou comest to Thy Kingdom.” Speak, O Lord, to my soul also that I shall be with you in the paradise of your Grace. Sustain me in your Grace and forgive me my sins.¹⁷⁶

Thus Chavara gives a good interpretation and personal application to the parable of the Prodigal son. The returning sons, the true disciples, surely will enjoy the happiness of the paradise in union with Jesus Christ.

¹⁷² Ibid. , 7.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Ibid. 7-8.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. , 8.

3.6.3 Concept of ‘Bosom’

In the Bible ‘bosom’ stands for the most dear place for rest. It is the abode of realization of every desire and dream.¹⁷⁷ In the Gospel of John we read that Son of God is seated at the ‘bosom’ of the heavenly Father (Jn. 1:18). It is said that when the poor man, Lazarus at the gate of the rich man died, he is carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom (Lk.16: 22). So ‘bosom’ is a heavenly place for rest, bliss and enjoyment. In the book of Samuel we read a parable told by Prophet Nathan. In that parable the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, and he reared it as his daughter by making it lie in his bosom (2Sam.12: 1-4). In his ‘bosom’ the little lamb found its heaven. From all these instances, we can find out that the most beloved children are admitted to the bosom of the father.¹⁷⁸

Chavara’s meditation on bosom is the result of his long desire to convert his heart into the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ. After a long waiting the divine secret was revealed to him. He finds out one bosom which is very much appreciated by Jesus. It was the lap of Mary, His mother. He addresses Jesus like this: “Behold, I have opened the door of my heart, I have set in my heart the holy lap of your mother which is most dear to you.”¹⁷⁹ Chavara has found out Jesus’ best and the most favourite place of rest, the holy bosom of Mary. He placed the Mother’s lap in his heart so that Jesus can come and enjoy His rest in him.¹⁸⁰

Here Chavara shows a short cut to keep the presence of Jesus always in the heart. This short way is to carry the holy bosom of Mary in the heart. Instead of turning to Jesus outside of oneself Chavara invites to turn to the interior castle of one’s own heart. That is the best place of Jesus’ indwelling. This experience of

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Kalluveettil, “Chavara the Dynamic Hermeneut of the Word,” 310.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Chavara, *Dhyānasallāpangal*, 43.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Kalluveettil, “Chavara the Dynamic Hermeneut of the Word,” 310.

union with Jesus in the heart is the greatest bliss which a human being is entitled to attain on earth.¹⁸¹

3.7 Directives for Families

Chavara wrote two letters to the Christian community at Kainakary. Of which the first letter can be considered as his catechetical teachings to the families. Christian family is the focus of this letter. Chavara knew the important role of the family in the formation of a healthy human society. He looks at the Christian family with the eyes of a pastor who is more practical than theoretical. For him family is a community bound together in blood and love and it reflects the heavenly bliss in this valley of tears.¹⁸²

Chavara's letter to the community at Kainakary is a code of conduct for Christian families. Through this letter he teaches the ideals of a Christian family such as love, forgiveness, acquiring properties, love for work, charity to others, justice, humility, patience, modesty, prayers, upbringing of children etc.¹⁸³ So, here we will have a brief discussion on these themes.

3.7.1 The Rules for a Christian Family

As a pastor Chavara gives guidelines to his people through his letter. These exhortations reveal his vision of the family and the family life. They contain a great deal of modern psychological and spiritual insights. He shaped them according to the social and cultural context of his time. However, they have not lost their meaning and relevance even today.¹⁸⁴ We discuss some of the key ideas here.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Ibid. , 311.

¹⁸² Cf. Kaniarakath, 14.

¹⁸³ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 68.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Kadankavil, 118.

3.7.1.1 Love as the Binding Force

According to the vision of Chavara, love is the life-giving force in the family. He presents love as the only force that can enable us to forgive one another and thus enjoy peace in this world and eternal bliss in the world to come.¹⁸⁵ For him the supreme rule of the Christian family is mutual love and the resultant unity of mind and heart. In the introduction of the letter he writes:

A family is the community of a few people joined together in blood relation and bound together by a bond of love, where the members exhibit mutual respect and practise obedience to parents and walk in peace before the Lord and the people; and each one, according to his proper state of life seeks to attain eternal salvation and lives peacefully.¹⁸⁶

He writes again:

In this world of tears, torn by pains and sufferings the greatest consolation is to live in a family where there is love, peace, charity and order. In the same way the greatest sorrow for a man would be to live in a family where there is no peace, no order, and where the members live independent of each other without caring for eternal salvation.¹⁸⁷

So he advises the family members to be charitable to each other and to love one another and forgive mutually each one's faults and shortcomings.¹⁸⁸ He says, "The honour and good fortune of a family lies in avoiding all factions and living in perfect amity and peace with all."¹⁸⁹ According to him forgiveness is the mark of great strength and prudence.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 119.

¹⁸⁶ Chavara, *The Letters*, 102.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. , 103.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. , 104.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Ibid.

3.7.1.2 Domestic Servants

Chavara warns the families to take care in the selection of the domestic servants. They are to be people who fear God and their number is to be limited. He says, “Many are the houses in which the devil does what he wishes through these servants. The masters must remember that they have the duty to watch the conduct of their servants and also to care for their spiritual well-being.”¹⁹¹ He also says, “Never withhold just wages from labourers or make undue delay in paying them, because that is an offence that cries out to God for justice.”¹⁹² Love is the measuring scale of justice and we need to look the needy through the eyes of love.¹⁹³ So he adds, “Do not insult the poor; neither should you vex them, because if God sees them weeping, He will surely wreak vengeance on you.”¹⁹⁴

3.7.1.3 Relationships in the Family

Chavara instructs about the fostering of relationships. He says that it is not good to establish relationships with families that are in disorder and are not God-fearing. Because, he says that it is not the rich relatives and friends that will bring benefit and happiness in our life, but those who lead orderly lives and are God-fearing.¹⁹⁵ With regard to good friendship he says:

Do not wish to make many friends. Out of thousands, choose just one. He who does not love God will not love you either. David and Jonathan were friends. They were of one mind. They loved each other sincerely and helped each other. They did not allow their love to be tarnished for silly reasons. Calamities and other mutual needs only served to strengthen their bond.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Ibid. , 111.

¹⁹² Ibid. , 109.

¹⁹³ Cf. Sophy Rose, *Daivakalpanakalkkoru Chavara Bhashyam* (Kottayam: Deepika Publications, 1996), 51.

¹⁹⁴ Chavara, *The Letters*, 109.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 106.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. , 108.

Chavara is not encouraging to admit all sorts of people in the house, but only those who are good and God-fearing. He stresses the point with a proverb, “Tell me who your friend is and I will tell you who you are.”¹⁹⁷ “Do not wander into other people’s houses hunting after news. If you spend your time looking after your own affairs, you will not find time to pry into other people’s business.”¹⁹⁸ But the poor and the sick are to be visited on Sundays and such other days. He says:

The days of your life that do not see some noble action done, may be counted as deleted from your life. Desire that others may love you rather than fear you. Do not allow beggars to leave your house empty-handed. Do not fail to give as much as you can by way of charity.¹⁹⁹

3.7.1.4 Economic Affairs

Chavara gives a number of instructions with regard to the economic affairs too. According to him a person who makes a display of his own riches is a person of low status. One who makes false pretensions of wealth will, sooner or later, be compelled to go begging.²⁰⁰ It is not good to make celebrations beyond one’s normal means. Chavara writes, “A small lamp that would render light steadily and long is much better than a hay stack that will blaze brightly forth and be put out in a moment.”²⁰¹ More important is to produce the maximum out of the land one owns than to acquire more and more land.²⁰² Everybody has to work sincerely according to their own state of life.²⁰³ Commercial business is harmful to one’s soul and even to one’s wealth. If there is no other choice other than this, it should be carried out with

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. , 106.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. , 105.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. , 108.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 105.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Cf. Ibid. , 107.

²⁰³ Cf. Ibid. , 105.

great care and with a sense of justice.²⁰⁴ One should not be too lavish or too stingy with one's riches because both are evil.²⁰⁵ As a practical principle of peace he says, "Do not borrow money except in special circumstances. If you have borrowed it earlier pay it back at the earliest. Do not also lend money unless compelled by charity. The family that has not contracted debts is to be considered the richest."²⁰⁶ Stolen articles are not to be allowed to be kept in the house. He reminds to be happy to repair old things rather than buy new ones.²⁰⁷ He writes, "A home is rich not because of its numerous possessions, but in the excellence of the few things owned."²⁰⁸ He also instructs that the poor are not to be despised because their tears are powerful before the Lord.²⁰⁹

3.7.1.5 Sanctification of Sacred Times

Chavara was very strict when he speaks about our duty towards God. Sacred days especially Sundays are meant for participation in the liturgical celebrations, reading good books and in visiting the poor and the sick.²¹⁰ He says, "Sundays and other days of obligation are our Lord's days. It is least befitting to hold secular celebrations on such days. It may cause many evils amounting even to the perdition of the souls."²¹¹ He emphasises the importance of participation in the Liturgy. He says:

²⁰⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 107.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 108.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. , 105.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 108.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. , 106.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Ibid. , 109.

²¹⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 111.

²¹¹ Ibid. , 104.

Through these Satan will be using his vile methods to convert the Lord's day to his own day. When anyone dies in a family, the nearest relatives may be exempted, it is not proper for others to give up their spiritual obligations and stay at the home of the dead. Such evil practice is condemned both by God and the Church.²¹²

3.7.1.6 Dignity of Work

Through our works we are participating in God's work of creation.²¹³ Our work itself becomes a glory and praise to God. So Chavara insists to do manual work as far as permitted by one's social status. He says, "A man of honour does not sit idle. Idleness is the way of life of persons who have neither a home nor a family. Idleness is the mother of all vices, especially of the habit of drinking."²¹⁴ Chavara comments that the habit of drinking is the most contemptible before men and sinful before God.²¹⁵ So by his letter Chavara conveys the message of the glory of work and gives the idea of avoiding evil thoughts and evil doings by involving always in some creative works.

3.7.1.7 Sacred Ambience

We need to keep a holy atmosphere in our home. Chavara says that the conversations in a Christian family have to keep its own dignity. That is a Christian family should not be a place for speaking ill of others and for gossiping.²¹⁶ Lack of modesty is highly shameful before God and men and therefore should practise the virtue of modesty and chastity in walking, sitting, laying down etc.²¹⁷ He says, "The

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Cf. Rose, *Daivakalpanakalkkoru Chavara Bhashyam*, 34.

²¹⁴ Chavara, *The Letters*, 107.

²¹⁵ Cf. Ibid.

²¹⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 106.

²¹⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 110.

highest wealth of a family is piety and fear of God. A family of God-fearing people enjoys God's blessing in this life and in the next.”²¹⁸

Good readings can also keep the purity of the minds and thereby the atmosphere of the families. Chavara writes:

The scientific books of pagans serve only to teach ignorance. To keep such books and the books of silly and indecent songs is like hiding fire in a haystack. Spiritual books and philosophical writings that promote and nurture devotion are treasures to be earned for children. Buy as many books of this sort as your means allow and keep them in your house.²¹⁹

He insisted that the Christian family must have a daily programme which should include fixed times for prayers, meditation, examination of conscience etc. He also gives a model time table including all these. The head of the family has to see to the regular observance of the programme.²²⁰

3.7.2 Christian Education of Children

Pope John Paul II in his *Letter to the Families* says, “Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children.”²²¹ “Religious education and the catechesis of children make the family a true subject of evangelisation and the apostolate within the Church.”²²² In the second part of the letter Chavara brings forth some important instructions on the education of children. Children are treasures entrusted by Jesus to the parents to be returned to him on the last day. They are to be purified in his blood and made his servants. The parents are responsible for their salvation or loss of salvation. Hence they are to be carefully brought up in the fear

²¹⁸ Ibid. , 109.

²¹⁹ Ibid. , 11.

²²⁰ Cf. Ibid. , 111-112.

²²¹ John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1994), no.16.

²²² Ibid.

and love of God. If they do not become good Christians or if they do not have the fear and love of God, they will have no fear or respect for their parents and will not be of any help to them in their old age.²²³ So here we see Chavara's instructions on education of children, their moral life and behaviour, choice of their state of life etc.

3.7.2.1 Religious and Civil Education of Children

Chavara reminds the parents of the family about their duty towards their children. He says that when children are able to learn things, they are to be taught to pronounce the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph with due devotion. They are to be dedicated to the protection of the Holy Family. Eventually they are to be taught to say the prayers like Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to, The Angelus etc. When the children reached the age of reason they must be sent to school. It is the duty of the parents to enquire whether and how the children study and behave and who their companions are. They should also be tested every Sunday.²²⁴

When they are at the age of eight, they are to be taught all about confession and should be made to make their confession. In a very special way they should be taught to be devoted to our Mother. Children will have to be corrected. But the parents are not to be too rigid or too light in this matter. He says:

Too much of indulgence will make them proud and too much of severity and punishment will make them desperate, shameless and weak of intellect. Before giving them physical punishment rebuke them with prudent benevolence.... While accusing them, be careful not to use abusive terms. This procedure will not serve to correct their faults, and when they grow up, they in their turn will act similarly with their children. The mother must set an example to them in loving and respecting the father and the father should teach them to love and respect the mother. If parents do not love and respect each other, the children cannot be expected to love and respect them.²²⁵

²²³ Cf. Chavara, *The Letters*, 112.

²²⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 112-113.

²²⁵ Ibid. , 114.

Children are not to be taught to tell lies and to use cunning means under the excuse that this is the way of the world. Instead the parents should teach them to love and respect truth and justice. He says to the parents to make it as a rule that the children should be at home when the bell for the Angelus is rung and to teach them to say ‘praise be to Jesus’ to the parents and to kiss their hands after the night prayers.²²⁶

3.7.2.2 Chaste Life

Chavara gives much importance to the chaste life of the children. He advises the parents that the conversations at home are to be pure and chaste especially when children are around. Children are not to be left to play away from the eyes of their parents. One should also be attentive to the servants who take care of them. Even sending children to the relatives' homes is dangerous. He writes that very often they leave the homes as angels and return home as devils.²²⁷ It is important to have a special care for the girls and he says, “A girl’s ornaments are modesty, piety, silence and control of the eyes.”²²⁸

3.7.2.3 Vocational Guidance

Children are to be completely free in the matter of choosing their life. It is God’s will and their choice. It is not the parents’ duty. Chavara says:

So when a boy is sixteen or eighteen and a girl fourteen or sixteen, he or she must choose his or her vocation. And for the marriage, the likes and the dislikes of the individual must in particular be considered. Rather than to rich and prestigious connections let importance be given to good character and conduct.²²⁹

²²⁶ Cf. Ibid.

²²⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 113.

²²⁸ Ibid. , 115.

²²⁹ Ibid.

Chavara instructs the parents not to leave their property too early to their children. At the same time he advises them to allow their children to live in separate establishments even before their death. He says, “Write out the will or partition deed in time; or else, after your death you will be responsible for the sins caused by their disputes and quarrels.”²³⁰

3.7.2.4 A Final Word to Children

In the last part of the letter Chavara addresses the children and advises them to respect their parents and to avoid giving them any pain. Here he narrates to the children a touching Japanese story as follows:

In a heathen country, Japan, there lived a mother with three children. They were extremely poor so much so that the children could not support their mother as she deserved. In this land thieves were invariably executed and if anybody captured a thief and handed him over to the Government authorities, a large prize was promised. In order to get some money to support their mother, one of them pretended to be a thief and the other two handed him over to the authorities and received their prize.... The authorities felt great admiration for him on learning this truth and informed the king of this fact. Besides setting the youth free, the king decreed that a pension should be given to the mother.²³¹

Chavara tells the children to remember this story always with regard to their duty towards their parents. Thus filled with practical wisdom Chavara gives a good catechesis to the parents and to the children by considering their physical, sociological, psychological, cultural and spiritual realms.

3.8 Eschatological Teachings

Chavara did not forget to present the hope of the eschatological glory of the Church also in his writings. In Paul’s letter to the Romans we read:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid. , 116.

will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved (Rom. 8:19-24).

Chavara wanted to convey this message of hope also to his people. He knew that this world is momentary and therefore instructing the people to look for a world of eternity. He writes:

Alas, the earth and the objects visible on it
Suffer inevitable change minute by minute
The fresh green grass of today, by tomorrow
Shrivels, turns seer in the heat of the sun
Blossoms bright of various hues and scents
Lose their shades and fragrance in the air
Momently they change and faded fall on the ground
How transient its wealth of beauty and form!²³²

Hence, in order to give awareness to the people and to prepare them for the eternal glory Chavara presents an eschatology which is based on Christian teachings and his own personal experiences. It includes the resurrection and the second coming of Jesus, the theology of death, the theology of Purgatory, the Communion of Saints etc. We discuss each of them here.

3.8.1 The Resurrection and the Second Coming of Jesus

The resurrection and the glory of Jesus are the basis of the resurrection and glory of all human beings. While narrating the resurrection of Jesus, Chavara says that all will get this same resurrection in Jesus. He presents it in a very special way:

The Lord, then through His power divine
Invested it with rare gifts
Of deathlessness and light and might
And granted these to man as well
To perform such a miracle He gave

²³² Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, II: 309-316.

The power to certain of his Saints
With this power it was, they could
To heaven ascend as bright as the sun.²³³

With regard to the second coming of Jesus, Chavara wants to teach his people. The aim of Jesus' second coming he narrates in this way:

And more I'd wish to hear you truly say
If twice He would on the face of earth appear
First to bring salvation to erring men
And then, the just and evil to prize or punish.²³⁴

At the time of His second coming all will raise from their death and they will receive their rewards according to their lives. Chavara writes:

The triple world then would resound with
Loud trumpet blasts of archangels train
“Rise, all ye dead and come forth quick
To receive the mead of your deeds ill or good.”
At this all spirits of human kind entering
Their corporeal forms, forsake their graves²³⁵

Chavara conveys the message that all have to prepare for this final judgement by our Lord Jesus Christ. That will be a dreadful sight. Those who were famous and great in this world will bow their heads in utter shame²³⁶ and those who were loyal to God's will receive their reward, the eternal bliss and joy with Jesus Christ.

3.8.2 Theology of Death

Chavara presents the theology of death in a very practical way that can be understood even by ordinary people. “Death liberates man from the vanity of

²³³ Ibid. , X: 21-28.

²³⁴ Ibid. , VI: 77-80.

²³⁵ Ibid. , 121-126.

²³⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 153-164.

creatures, giving true knowledge.”²³⁷ He quotes the statement of Ecclesiastes 7:1-2 and writes as follows:

The day you die is better far
Than the day you were born on earth
A funeral function more refreshing
Than a wedding feast in sooth.²³⁸

Death is a reality, which everybody will have to face. But it is forgotten by all. So Chavara tries to remind them of this reality by allowing a dead man to speak to the people in the following way:

When we were happy and gay
Yesterday, I was as you are now
And you'll be like me tomorrow
The destiny that is mine today
I can never share with you
But the same fate awaits you
Bear you, this always in mind
Friends are many, when we are alive
When you die, all will leave
Companions several had I
But who will now befriend me?²³⁹

Death will catch every human being unexpectedly. It will lead them to eternity. So Chavara conveys the message of vigilance. They need to be always ready to face this reality of death. If they are always friendly with worldly things, they will lose this awareness. So Chavara pointed out a true friend- virtues – who will be always with them even after their death.

²³⁷ Cf. Gabriel Aranjaniyil, “Eschatological Perspectives in *DIRGE*,” in Paul Kalluveettil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds. , *The Lord of Heaven and Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattickal, CMI* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 334.

²³⁸ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Dirge*, Mary Leo, trans. *Complete Works of Blessed Chavara Vol. II* (Mannanam: The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1989), 1-4.

²³⁹ Ibid. , 20-30.

3.8.3 The Four Friends

The departed soul of the man in Chavara's *Dirge* speaks of his four friends. At first he speaks of the three friends who betrayed him at the time of death. He had believed in them and day and night he had toiled for them. But only at the time of death he came to know that they were false friends. Chavara writes as if the soul says:

O how much I loved them,
Three of them, I bound close to me
Of the three I preferred one
I held him dear, as my heart
.....
Then I found another friend
Not distinct from the first
.....
Yet a third friend had I
Ever from me inseparable
Ever and anon he stayed with me
In times of joy and of pain.²⁴⁰

Chavara says that the world, the dear and near ones and his own body are these three friends.²⁴¹ The dead man who is presented in Chavara's *Dirge* had spent the whole of his energy for these friends. But when he was before the Eternal Judge, they abandoned him. Very frankly they told they are utterly powerless to help him.²⁴² So he introduces the fourth friend, virtues.²⁴³ Virtue is the only true friend. The dead man had a happy death only because he loved this fourth friend, virtue. Thus, Chavara conveys the message that it is necessary to keep in mind always the realities

²⁴⁰ Ibid. , 31-66.

²⁴¹ Cf. Ibid. , 178-186.

²⁴² Cf. Ibid. , 101-140.

²⁴³ Cf. Ibid. , 188.

of “death, judgement, and heaven”²⁴⁴ and to live with hope by following the ways of virtues.

3.8.4 Theology of Purgatory

In order to get the vision of God after our death we need to be totally pure. “Even though a man may be found very holy, since some stains may be found in him in the sight of God, he can enter heaven only after becoming holy by removing them in the purifying fire of Purgatory.”²⁴⁵ That is, he has to undergo intense pain in Purgatory. After our death we cannot change the justice of God into the mercy of God. But those who are still living can do that for us, by their good works and prayers.²⁴⁶ Chavara explains this in the words of the departed soul as follows:

Forget me not you my loved ones
Make haste and pray to relieve me soon
If you but just pray to the Lord
He for certain would pardon grant
None but you can prevail on Him
To temper His justice with sweet mercy

My day is past, I can work no more
No one hears my piteous lament
If you but pray for me now
Sure, He will mercy bestow.²⁴⁷

Till death human beings are able to ask the mercy of God. But after death they cannot do anything for themselves. They need the help of those who are living. Chavara reminds them of their limitedness and the need to live in the world according to the will of God. He also reminds them of their duty to pray for the departed souls. In order to make them understand the condition of the departed souls Chavara uses

²⁴⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 205-206.

²⁴⁵ Aranjaniyil, 336.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Chavara, *Dirge*: 315-324.

several short stories in his *Dirge* so that all can understand it easily. One of such stories which show the severe suffering in the Purgatory is as follows:

An invalid religious was informed by the angel that though he would go to Purgatory after death he would have to suffer only for the duration of the celebration of a Holy Mass. When he informed a religious friend about this, he promised to celebrate Mass for him immediately after his death. When the invalid religious died immediately after closing the eyes the friend offered Mass for him and when he was meditating with his brethren the dead religious appeared to him and asked him, "Is this your love? Why did you prolong my suffering?" Then the friend replied that he had offered the Mass immediately after his death, as he had promised. Then the friend who had entered heaven said that the half hour seemed to him thousand days.²⁴⁸

So Chavara informs that it is good to get the purification of the soul in this world itself.²⁴⁹ The readiness to take the worldly sufferings with good will is necessary for this. God wants back the souls of the human beings as pure as He Himself. So they need to undergo this purification here on earth or after their death. So this place for purification is made by God. Chavara writes:

Can the heat suffice for gold
As is given for lead to melt
To destroy the dross in man on earth
This fire was made by God in truth
To purge the stains of sin off the soul
And to render it rich in glory
To cleanse it as befits His justice
He made the flames of Purgatory.²⁵⁰

3.8.5 The Communion of the Saints

The Catholic Church believes in the Communion of the Saints. These saints are always ready to help the people who are on earth.²⁵¹ Chavara believed in the

²⁴⁸ Aranjaniyil, 337. Cf. also Chavara, *Dirge*: 601-652.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Chavara, *Dirge*: 651-652.

²⁵⁰ Ibid. , 359-366.

²⁵¹ Cf. Ibid. , 1065-1070.

intercession of the Saints before God. He also believed that they could hide the limitations of human beings and short comings by their holiness. He is asking Teresa of Avila to help him to pray as she did:

O! Mother, affectionate and generous, you being a well accomplished mistress in the mysteries of meditation, I again seek your loving intercession in obtain for me from Jesus the great gift of love.... Now that you are in union with Jesus, the Bridegroom in heavenly bedchamber, your favours with Him must be greater now than when you were on earth.... O! Mother dear, teach me to pray!²⁵²

Chavara is again requesting Mary Magdalene to bring Jesus and His Mother to dwell in his heart. He says:

Dear Mother, you know how strong is my desire to invite them so that they to stay in my heart. At the same time you must not forget the fact that my home (heart) is ill- furnished and that I am unable to give them a fitting welcome suiting their status. But because of the great love Jesus bears for you, He will oblige you and will certainly come to my heart, however poor and unfurnished it is...²⁵³

Here Chavara's message is that by making use of the help of holy angels and saints who are in heaven, people can make their lives better here on earth. Their intercession before God is very powerful and they can really help the people in all the aspects of their lives and if they are really in company with these Saints, they will surely lead them to God, for their eternal life.

3.9 Christian Witness

In his letter to the Philippians Paul says, "To me, living is Christ and dying is gain" (Phil. 1:21). To live and die for Christ is the Christian call. Chavara explains this truth through his minor epic *Anasthasia's Martyrdom*. It is the story of a beautiful girl, Anasthasia, who was persecuted by the minister of the Roman emperor, Valerian in the third century A.D. Along with her one Cyrillos also was beheaded

²⁵² Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 2-3.

²⁵³ Ibid. , 20-21.

because he offered her water to drink.²⁵⁴ Thus in the Church these two martyrs were venerated from the early period onwards.²⁵⁵

When Chavara wrote this the Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala was under the influence of Schisms (Rokos Schism). Hence his aim was to keep the people in true faith and to give them strength even to die for true faith.²⁵⁶ When there are challenges in faith, that is a sign to make it stronger. The strengthening words Chavara writes as follows:

It is the Lord, your holy groom
Show his glory, show his might
The Lord you love so dear and well
Oh! He your constant friend for'ver.²⁵⁷

Chavara presents Anasthasia as a strong person in faith before persecution and thus inspires the heart of the people to stand for faith in their trials and keep Jesus as their Lord and God. Jesus says in the Gospel of Mathew that rejoice and be glad at the time of persecution (Cf. Mt. 5:11). The true disciple of Jesus is able to sing songs and praises during persecution. Great Saints like Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross etc. preferred to suffer more and more for the sake of the love for Jesus. Here, Chavara also presents a model like them in the person of Anasthasia and says that in spite of all her pains and sufferings she praised the name of God.²⁵⁸ She could prove the words of the letter of Paul to the Romans. Paul says, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness,

²⁵⁴ Cf. Z. M. Moozhoor, “Literary Contributions of Blessed Chavara,” *Herald of the East* II (January 1993): 85.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Z. M. Moozhoor, *Chavarayachante Kavyakrithikal- Padanangal* (Pala: Aramam Publications, 2006), 121.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Anto Thekkoodan, “Anasthasiayude Rakthasakshyam,” CMI- CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, *Chavara: Vyakthiyum Sidhiyum* (Kochi: CMI- CMC Pravarthakasamidhi, 1994), 191.

²⁵⁷ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Anasthasia’s Martyrdom*, Mary Leo, trans. *Complete Works of Blessed Chavara Vol. II* (Mannanam: The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1989), 60-63.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Ibid. , 155-156.

or peril, or sword?" (Rom. 8:35). He again says, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). Hence, Chavara presents here a model of a true disciple who is free from all the bondages. He writes:

She was joyful, she was lovely
Bondage outside, freedom inward
Freedom that the world can't give
Freedom that the world can't take.²⁵⁹

Faith in Jesus Christ is a treasure, which is given as a gift from God. This gift needs to grow and to become mature. This mature faith makes the people models for others to believe and to live and die for Christ. If there is true faith, there is true love. If the love is true, the person will give the whole life to the lover. Chavara presents the true Christian life in terms of giving oneself whole heartedly to the ever lover, Jesus Christ. For him, to die for Christ is the highest Christian witness and martyrdom is the great sign of love towards Jesus Christ. It provides the gift of eternal bliss, a mystical union with Jesus Christ. Chavara narrates this mystical union of Anasthasia as follows:

Christ the King, her lovely groom
Welcomed her into bliss with Him
Jewels of marvel, pearls of price
All heaped on her by Lord divine
He held her in His close embrace
She loved Him deep with warmth sublime.²⁶⁰

The ultimate goal of Christian life is this mystical union with Jesus Christ. Chavara conveys this message all through his writings. It was the only thing he

²⁵⁹ Ibid. , 131-134.

²⁶⁰ Ibid. , 225-230.

longed for in his life and instructed his people to long for. His whole hearted prayer shows this, “Oh Lord, do not be separate from us until we are one with you.”²⁶¹

4. Conclusion

Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. God became man in order to make perfect this image and likeness, which they had lost by their sins. Catechesis aims to find out this true image and likeness in Jesus Christ. When Chavara wrote, his aim too was to help his people to find their real image and likeness in Jesus Christ. As we saw, his writings consist of sufficient matters to fulfil this task of catechesis. More than a teaching or an instruction they are the contents of catechesis. However, there are instructions and teachings too. For the families he gives a list of instructions. He gives a method of prayer and meditation and instructs to grow in the higher levels of prayer. Through his writings Chavara could give a good Christology, Mariology and Eschatology. He explains them not in the style of a theologian but in the view of a pastor. Additional stories and meditative imaginations used by Chavara in his writings shows his pastoral approach and communication skill. Human life is in a continuous process of transformation. It needs to grow more and more in divinity, in holiness. In his writings Chavara could present Jesus and Mary as the true models to imitate in the journey of the human beings towards the eternal glory. All are created by God and for God. So their life in this world presupposes a holy life as suit for God. Chavara’s instructions on Sacraments, Religious life, prayer life, family life and his eschatological visions are meant for this awareness. Thus Chavara gives a solid catechesis through his written words.

Chavara was a man who lived in the nineteenth century. But many of his thoughts and visions are valuable even today. Holy ideas and visions and even a holy life may be utter foolishness for the people of this world. That is what Paul says, “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing” (1Cor. 1:18). But ultimately the whole world is longing for the union with God, and God Himself

²⁶¹ Chavara, *The Letters*, 83.

made it possible through His only Son Jesus Christ. Chavara proposes simple ways and enough contents of faith, which all can follow, in order to know Jesus Christ, the Son of God and to achieve this goal of union with Him. Thus, his writings can be seen as a simple catechism for the ordinary people, both religious and lay people. So with regard to its relevance we will discuss more in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

RELEVANCE OF CHAVARA'S WRITINGS IN CATECHESIS

1. Introduction

The communion with Jesus Christ is the ultimate objective of catechesis.¹ As a brilliant catechetical teacher, Chavara proclaimed the possibility and means to attain this communion with Jesus Christ. As we saw in the last chapter his writings give a good content of catechesis which leads to this goal. Though it is written years before the Second Vatican Council it has the catechetical thrust and relevance even today. His visions, teachings and reflections are living with “fresh vigour and meaning.”² Here we see his relevance from a catechetical perspective. In catechesis content is an important thing. The content of catechesis includes “the creed (our faith), liturgy (our celebration), commandments (our values) and prayer (our prayer).”³ The tasks, objects, loci etc. are also relevant topics in catechesis. When we analyse the catechetical relevance of Chavara’s writings, we take into consider these areas of catechesis. We use the *General Directory for Catechesis* as its main reference. With the help of the *General Directory for Catechesis* we analyse the contents, tasks, objects and loci of catechesis in Chavara’s writings and confirm its relevance. The chapter concludes by quoting some selected catechetical maxims of Chavara.

2. Catechetical Effects in Chavara’s Writings

We have seen the fundamental tasks of catechesis in the third chapter. So here we try to compare Chavara’s writings with these tasks.

¹ *GDC* 80.

² Sergius, “Relevance of Blessed Chavara Today,” *Herald of the East* 6 (July 2004): 27.

³ *Call and Response*, no. 80.

2.1 Promoting Knowledge of Faith

Chavara was convinced that proper knowledge is necessary to live a true Christian life. He calls the lack of knowledge as blindness.⁴ According to him knowledge is a source of enlightenment.⁵ Christians, especially priests and religious are supposed to lead the people. If they are lacking proper knowledge of faith they cannot lead others. Hence Chavara included necessary knowledge of faith in his writings. The main portion of his writings contains the mysteries of Christ and faith of the Church. The history of the Syro-Malabar Church was also included in his writings. Thus he could provide a good amount of contents of catechesis in his writings in order to promote the knowledge of faith. If the meaning of Creed is the compendium of the Scriptures and of the faith of the Church⁶ Chavara's writings includes the elaborate explanation and interpretation of this Creed. He writes:

Of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
The Son Incarnate in Mary's purest womb,
(A myst'ry to human minds inconceivable)
Took birth as man, this pretty earth to bless!
Bore pain and agony untold, in Pilate's days
And died and thence rose from dismal death.⁷

As an explanation of this he writes again, "To redeem you He descended and assumed a frail body like that of yours, abused and condemned by His enemies, branded as thief, shed His blood and died on a cross on Calvary. He became a man of sorrows. All this was to redeem you and to bless you with innumerable graces."⁸ He explains this faith from his own life experiences. Hence one who reads his writings, especially his main writing *Āthmānuthāpam*, can surely be enriched by the knowledge of faith. The content of faith keeps its newness when it is interpreted and become the

⁴ Cf. Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 98.

⁵ Chavara, *The Letters*, 95.

⁶ Cf. GDC 85.

⁷ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 70-76.

⁸ Chavara, *Dhyanasallapangal*, 54.

part of the life of the faithful. Hence the content of faith he proposed, continues to promote knowledge of faith among the faithful.

2.2 Liturgical Education

Chavara knew that Liturgy is the fount of all powers⁹ of Church's activities and so he gave much importance to instruct on Liturgy and Sacraments in his writings. Liturgy and Sacraments give meaning to Christian life. In his writings, especially in spiritual writings he explains it very clearly. On the Sacrament of Baptism he writes, "The gift of Baptism was given you that you may by it became a child of God and inherit all riches of heaven."¹⁰ With regard to the Holy Eucharist he writes that Jesus gave "His body and blood to feed and strengthen you so that you may successfully fight your enemies and withstand his onslaught."¹¹ He teaches that in the Liturgical celebration it is not ox or doves that is killed and offered in sacrifice on the altar, but it is the Son of the Eternal Father.¹² When he wrote to the families of Kainakary, he did not forget to mention the importance of Liturgy.¹³ He writes:

Participate in the daily mass, if possible, everyday. If not, participate in the holy mass on Monday for the holy souls in purgatory; on Fridays in devotion to the passion of our Lord and on Saturdays in honour of our Lady of sorrows. If all the members of a family cannot go every day for holy mass, let one or two persons go in turn every day for mass. Make your confession and receive holy communion at least once a week.¹⁴

Even if one dies in a family, according to Chavara, it is not good to give up the spiritual obligations. He says, "When anyone dies in a family, the nearest relatives

⁹ Cf. Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Austin Flannery, ed. , *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Mumbai: St. Paul Publications, 2004), no. 10.

¹⁰ Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 28.

¹¹ Ibid. , 29.

¹² Cf. Ibid. , 26.

¹³ Cf. Chavara, *The Letters*, 104.

¹⁴ Ibid. , 109-110.

may be exempted, it is not proper for others to give up their spiritual obligations and stay at the home of the dead.”¹⁵ He did not give an over all study on Liturgy and did not mention directly on all the seven Sacraments in his writings. But whatever he wrote in this realm can be considered as a good and relevant liturgical education.

2.3 Moral Formation

Moral life and life witnessing are very much emphasised in Chavara’s writings. It was his concern that Christian families should be the model for others in their moral life, when he gives directives to the families.¹⁶ Moral life includes justice to God and to others. According to him Sundays and other days of obligation are Lord’s days. So he says that it is not good to convert the Lord’s Day to Satan’s day.¹⁷ Justice to others is equally important. He writes:

Never withhold just wages from labourers or make undue delay in paying them, because that is an offence that cries out to God for justice. Do not insult the poor; neither should you vex them, because if God sees them weeping, He will surely wreak vengeance on you.¹⁸

According to Chavara’s morality it is sinful to keep a stolen article in one’s house. He says, “Have nothing to do with any one who steals another person’s property, because he will not hesitate to rob you of your wealth at an opportune time. Besides, you too will share his sin.”¹⁹ He also instructs the parents that they should not teach their children “to tell lies and to use cunning means under the excuse that this is the way of the world.”²⁰ The circulars which he sent to the members of his

¹⁵ Ibid. , 104.

¹⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 102-116.

¹⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 104.

¹⁸ Ibid. , 109.

¹⁹ Ibid. , 108-109.

²⁰ Ibid. , 114.

own Congregation also insist on a moral and model life.²¹ He writes, “Oh! My dear brethren, if you do not know how to save your own souls, if you are ignorant of how to live up to your vocation, what is it that you know? What have you learnt so far?”²² When Chavara focussed on moral life and Christian formation he says that it is the primary duty of the parents to bring up their children well. He writes:

...the parents will be responsible for every sin committed by their children. If you want them to be your comfort and to stay with you in your old age, bring them up like good Christians when they are still young. If they don't respect and fear God when they are young, they will not later love or respect their parents. Parents should often offer their children up to God and entrust them to the intercession of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and often pray for them.²³

2.4 Teaching to Pray

Chavara was a man of prayer and prayer elements can be found all through his writings. In *Āthmānuthāpam* Chavara portrays Mary, the Mother of God as a model of prayer and meditation.²⁴ He teaches the stages of meditation to the sisters through his *Letters*.²⁵ Besides these, he inserted a list of prayers in most of his writings. For the intention of the Holy Pope he asked prayers from the members of his Congregation so that the persecution of the Catholic Church may cease and peace and joy may prevail all over the world.²⁶ In order to recite in the community he wrote in the circular the following prayer:

Lord Jesus, remembering that you did not spare yourself from those infinite sufferings at the hands of your enemies, and from the lack of faith and ingratitude of your apostles, look with mercy upon the same frail human family, we pray. Eternal Father, in reparation for my sins and through the

²¹ Cf. Ibid. , 60-66.

²² Ibid. , 64.

²³ Ibid. , 112.

²⁴ Cf. Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, IX-XII.

²⁵ Cf. Chavara, *The Letters*, 85.

²⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 68.

merits of the holy Catholic Church, I offer up to you the precious blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.²⁷

During the period of Schism Chavara wrote circular to the parishes and asked them to repeat the following ejaculatory prayer to Mother Mary:

O Mary our divine mother, born without original sin, who, at all times has removed every threat that menaces the Church, do not leave our Church to be devoured by the new schism that is springing up. Have mercy on us so that all may perfectly obey the Pope, the Supreme Pontiff who has the authority from Peter, the Apostle.²⁸

According to Chavara the relationship of a Religious, who lives in a convent or in a monastery, with Jesus Christ is a spousal relationship. In a letter to the sisters he encouraged them for their prayer and adoration as follows:

...the adoration you give to your divine spouse Jesus Christ from the corner of your convent is most pleasing to him. I have seen with my own eyes that the palaquin in which the queen was travelling was covered on all sides with a thick curtain to hide her from human gaze, if so how more demanding would be your divine spouse. Hence whatever be the kind of adoration the Holy Church wants you to offer, you could offer it remaining in your convent. You will be amply rewarded.²⁹

In another letter Chavara writes to the sisters, “Offer up to God every pulse beat of our veins, every winking of our eyes, every breath of ours, each little chirping of the birds- yes everything as our prayer.”³⁰ With a great zeal he instructs the parents also for giving training to their children in prayer life. He writes:

As soon as they are old enough to understand things, teach them to repeat with devotion the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Show them their pictures or statues and make them kiss them and respect and love those three. When they begin to speak teach them to recite the prayers- Our Father, Hail Mary and

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. , 99.

²⁹ Ibid. , 77.

³⁰ Ibid. , 78.

Glory be, the Angelus and other prayers. How profitable it would be if they are given their spiritual food along with the material food.³¹

2.5 Education for Community Life

In order to foster community life, both religious communities and families, Chavara gives a list of instructions. He presents ‘love’ as the binding force of a community. If all are living like children of one family that will be a true community and a mini heaven on earth.³² He emphasises the virtues like charity, humility, neatness, promptness,³³ obedience,³⁴ patience³⁵ etc. for the betterment of the community life. He writes:

It is very painful to see men and women quarrelling with one another.... A family that is always at feuds will meet with destruction. If you cannot forgive each other your faults and shortcomings, how can an outsider do so? If you love just those who have not done any harm to you, how are you different from the unbelievers, who too love their friends and relatives? Over and above the pains and sufferings we all have inherited from our forefather Adam, do you want to create more troubles to yourself. Woe to them who cause such quarrels and troubles.³⁶

According to Chavara a true Christian community or a Christian family should not be a place for indulging in profane conversation. It should not be a place for speaking ill of others and for gossiping.³⁷ Through his writings he gives a good education for community life. He writes, “The honour and good fortune of a family

³¹ Ibid. , 113.

³² Cf. Ibid. , 71.

³³ Cf. Ibid. , 67.

³⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 70.

³⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 103.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 106.

lies in avoiding all factions and living in perfect amity and peace with all.”³⁸ He shows also the strength of the virtue of forgiveness in a true Christian community by telling the following story:

Once, while the emperor Constantine with his retinue was walking along the road a certain man slapped the emperor. Immediately the whole retinue being greatly offended approached the emperor and advised him to punish the man justly and even to sentence him to death. The emperor’s reply to such advice was just this: “Where is the honour in my doing something which, even my least official can do. But to forgive this offence shall be my highest honour and strength.”³⁹

2.6 Missionary Initiation

Chavara was a man for others. His missionary zeal revealed in the establishment of two religious Congregations (CMI and CMC). In *The Chronicles of the Koonammavu Convent* he himself wrote the following:

In the land of Malayalam (Kerala) even though the true Christian religion was in practice from very early times, there existed no monasteries or convents. The people had heard of men and women who practised religious virtues but they did not have living examples of religious virginity, except that the men who had the privilege of priesthood lived a life of chastity. As for women even those who desired to live a virginal life, had no way of embracing such a life-style. They had no option. They had to accept marriage and live as worldly women. The people were living in this sad plight for a very long time...⁴⁰

For the establishment of the convent Chavara depends totally on the providence of God. The work on the house for the convent was begun with eighteen rupees. He writes, “In the beginning of the year 1866, a person donated Rs. 10 out of a debt he was paid back through the monastery. With that and Rs. 8 got from some other source, work on the house was begun.”⁴¹ He believed that all the missionary

³⁸ Ibid. , 104.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Benicacia, ed. , *The Chronicles of the Koonammavu Convent*, 21.

⁴¹ Chavara, *The Chronicles*, 105.

activities are God's works. On one occasion he wrote, "Our task is only to arrange for the work to be done. God will give us the money for it, because all this is God's work. Our competence here is only to work."⁴² *The Chronicles* of Chavara explains several missionary activities which started and continued in Chavara's time. Confraternities, preaching retreats etc. were new in the Syrian Church. He writes, "In Syrian Churches there were no confraternities....Neither was there the custom of preaching to the people."⁴³ Besides these, his *Letters* also call for many of the missionary activities. He insisted the first members of the convent to write the chronicles regularly for the good of the coming generations. He writes, "I had urged Sr. Anna to note down every detail in the chronicle. I think she has realized it now. If she notes down everything without being lazy I am sure you will all enjoy it while reading after sometime."⁴⁴ His *Letters* witness also the missionary activities like Home of charity,⁴⁵ Confraternity for happy death⁴⁶ etc. According to Chavara these are the acts of the mercy⁴⁷ which help "the poor and the destitute who have no one to take care of."⁴⁸ The culmination of the missionary spirit can be found in the story of Anasthasia in his *Anasthasia's Martyrdom*. During the period of Schism Chavara strengthened the people through his circular and mentioned about the value of martyrdom there. He writes, "If you happen to suffer martyrdom at their hands, remember that it will be the greatest grace of God you would receive."⁴⁹ He could prove this in the story of Anasthasia. He narrates it as follows:

⁴² Chavara, *The Letters*, 81.

⁴³ Chavara, *The Chronicles*, 65.

⁴⁴ Chavara, *The Letters*, 76.

⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 117-128.

⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 94.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 126.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. , 99.

The gift of faith, to die for Christ
She knew her death so close and dear
Death that opens door to life
She knew her journey closing soon
She raised her hands and thanked her God
God who gave up life for us
God who save us sinners so
Lend me grace to give myself
My life, a holocaust for you.⁵⁰

3. Centrality of Jesus Christ in Chavara's Writings

According to the *General Directory for Catechesis* communion with Jesus Christ is the object of catechesis.⁵¹ The same object we can see in the writings of Chavara also. Jesus Christ is the centre of catechesis in his writings. The Second Vatican Council teaches that “all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life”⁵² which is the aim of catechesis. In order to attain this Christian fullness the Council teaches as follows:

...the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ’s gift, so that, following in his footsteps and conformed to his image, doing the will of God in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory and to the service of their neighbour.⁵³

Thus Chavara also instructs the faithful to keep Jesus as their centre and to follow His footsteps in everything and everywhere. All the works and activities of Chavara were focussed on this object. He writes, “Above all, learn the art of loving Jesus Christ. Stay constantly in His presence. Walk along with Him. Converse with

⁵⁰ Chavara, *Anasthasia's Martyrdom*: 188-196.

⁵¹ Cf. *GDC* 80.

⁵² Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Mumbai: St. Paul Publications, 2004), no. 40.

⁵³ Ibid.

Him continuously.”⁵⁴ He says again, “May Jesus Christ bless you. Remain with Him in your cell which is His royal chamber with joy and peace of mind.”⁵⁵

In order to show the fullness of Christian life, a life in Jesus Christ, Pope John Paul II in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, uses the phrase, “dwelling in the heart of God.”⁵⁶ That is what Jesus says, “Abide in me as I abide in you” (Jn. 15: 4). Chavara also gives importance to this mutual indwelling in his writings. This is his prayer, “Oh Lord, do not be separate from us until we are one with you.”⁵⁷ The main portion of Chavara’s writings is centred on Jesus Christ. As Pope John Paul II says Chavara understood that centrality of Jesus Christ must be “a fundamental presupposition and an irreplaceable condition for everyone in fulfilling the mission of salvation within Church.”⁵⁸ He writes:

You my Love, my joy and all my good fortune
If not with you, how could I live my life
My very breath, my food, my drink
What solace have I save in you!⁵⁹

It was Chavara’s desire that all people should know Jesus and should follow his model. So he wrote:

Regal lion, your noble grace
Our Kerala would see
On this earth, with misery filled
The power of evil holds away
Your creed, that gave us strength to live
All accepting, I long to see.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Chavara, *The Letters*, 82.

⁵⁵ Ibid. , 78.

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (Bombay: Pauline Publications, 1995), no. 8.

⁵⁷ Cf. Chavara, *The Letters*, 83.

⁵⁸ John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1988), no. 17.

⁵⁹ Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, II: 143-146.

⁶⁰ Ibid. , III Supplement: 25-30.

Chavara presents Jesus as the Saviour and the Lord of all in his writings as follows:

Lord of all, Giver of gifts
As the Sun, tearing clouds, shines forth
May your Son, you granted to be
Saviour of all, comes forth the virgin womb;
Permit us to adore Him on earth
Come, quick to slake our thirst.⁶¹

Especially Chavara's *Āthmānuthāpam* is a meditative narration of the whole Christ event. The Incarnation of Jesus, His passion, death, resurrection and ascension, descend of the Holy Spirit etc. are explained in it. Towards the end of this he emphasizes again the truth that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the mankind.⁶²

4. Importance of Loci of Catechesis

The *General Directory for Catechesis* specifies the important loci of catechesis. They are: The Christian community,⁶³ the family,⁶⁴ the baptismal catechumenate,⁶⁵ the parish,⁶⁶ Catholic Schools,⁶⁷ associations, movements and groups of the faithful⁶⁸ and Basic Ecclesial Communities.⁶⁹ Most of these are used by

⁶¹ Ibid. , V: 25-30.

⁶² Chavarayachan, *Āthmānuthāpam*, Concluding Prayer: 61-63.

⁶³ Cf. *GDC* 253-254.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 255.

⁶⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 256.

⁶⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 257-258.

⁶⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 259-260.

⁶⁸ Cf. Ibid. , 261-262.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ibid. , 263-264.

Chavara as loci for faith formation in the nineteenth century itself. Some of them are presented below.

4.1 The Christian Community and the Family

In *Christifidelis Laici* Pope John Paul II says, “The family is the basic cell of society. It is the cradle of life and love, the place on which the individual *is born* and *grows*.⁷⁰ Chavara also had the same vision about Christian families. He writes:

A family is the community of a few people joined together in blood relation and bound together by a bond of love, where the members exhibit mutual respect and practice obedience to parents and walk in peace before the Lord and the people and each one, according to this proper state of life seeks to attain eternal salvation and lives peacefully.⁷¹

So Chavara selected the family as the focus for faith formation. In order to catechise them he wrote practical rules for the families⁷² and most of them are relevant in today’s situation too.

4.2 Parishes

The *General Directory for Catechesis* presents the parish as the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed.⁷³ There are several circulars and letters we can find in Chavara’s writings which had helped the parishioners in one way or other. Especially at the time of Rokos Schism Chavara strengthened the faith of the people of different parishes through his circular.⁷⁴ It is in the parish and with the cooperation of the parishioners he started the Confraternity of

⁷⁰ John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici*, no. 40.

⁷¹ Chavara, *The Letters*, 102.

⁷² Cf. Ibid. , 103-116.

⁷³ Cf. *GDC* 257.

⁷⁴ Cf. Chavara, *The Letters*, 98-99.

St. Joseph for happy death⁷⁵ and the Home of Charity.⁷⁶ Through his circulars he instructs the parishioners to dedicate their families to the Holy Family. He explains the reason as follows:

Man, the crown of creation, is created by God of infinite goodness. The moment he was born, death too was born. To cross over this sea of death, the voyage is really difficult and perilous. Therefore in order to cross over this sea, we need a sailor who is really an expert, familiar with the route and who, at the same time, is capable of withstanding every obstacle on the route. We need also a heavy anchor which would resist every tempest in the sea and protect the ship from being caught amidst the bellows. We need also a strong vessel, strong enough to resist the tempests of the sea and which gives guarantee of safety and protection to the passengers.

Such a strong vessel, which would resist every tempest of the dangerous sea is Mary our Mother, the refuge of sinners; the powerful and heavy anchor which protects the ship lest it be caught amidst the bellows of the sea is Jesus Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father; the sailor who is familiar with the route and who would safely bring the passengers to safety landing, is St. Joseph, the patron of happy death.⁷⁷

Chavara could use the parishes as a best place for faith formation. He teaches the parishioners to remember and to meditate the holy names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and renew their dedication to the Holy Family every year on the feast of St.Joseph (19 March) by giving food and clothing to a man, a woman and a child.⁷⁸

4.3 Catholic Schools, Boardings and Catechumenates

Chavara believed that education is a source of power and means of empowerment of a person.⁷⁹ So he started schools, boardings attached to convents

⁷⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 94.

⁷⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 126.

⁷⁷ Ibid. , 93-94.

⁷⁸ Cf. Ibid.

⁷⁹ Cf. Jacob Peenikaparambil, “The Educational Vision of Blessed Chavara and the Challenges of Today,” *Herald of the East* 6 (December 2004): 92.

and catechumenates attached to Monasteries. He made use of these places to bring the Word of God to the children as well as the grown up people through the sisters and through the members of his Congregation. It is very clear from his letters. In a letter to the sisters he adds, “May the Mother Superior read this letter to the community and to the children of the boarding house.”⁸⁰ On another occasion he writes, “Give to the children in the boarding house this hagiography written in verse. You can read it for them.”⁸¹

4.4 Associations and Movements

Chavara knew that associations and movements can help the lay mission in the Church. The *General Directory for Catechesis* also says that these associations and movements are meant “to help the disciples of Jesus Christ to fulfil their lay mission in the world and in the Church.”⁸² With this conviction Chavara encouraged the people to start associations in their parishes. In his letter to the people of Kainakari he asked them to start a Confraternity for Happy Death and a Home of Charity.⁸³ A system of collection of ‘a handful rice’ also was started by the name ‘Charitable Association of Infant Jesus.’ He writes about this in *The Chronicles*: “For the newly instituted Charitable Association of Infant Jesus, in every house a box with the label ‘Deposit for Infant Jesus’ should be placed. Thrice a day a handful rice should be put away in it- reciting the ejaculation- Infant Jesus bless us.”⁸⁴ When he asked for the Confraternity of St. Joseph for Happy Death he meant for a team action and encouraged his people for that. He writes:

Though you may perform such a pious practice individually you may find it difficult in course of time and one may even forget it sometimes. In order that

⁸⁰ Chavara, *The Letters*, 83.

⁸¹ Ibid. , 79.

⁸² GDC 261.

⁸³ Cf. Chavara, *The Letters*, 126-127.

⁸⁴ Chavara, *The Chronicles* , 109.

such a pious practice may be continued without break and as the team action will be more propitious, all those who wish to meet a happy death may form a confraternity under the patronage of St. Joseph for happy death. Hence let all who wish to join such a confraternity contribute...so that from the interest accruing from the collection, we may accomplish the above pious practice in common.⁸⁵

5. Other Catechetical Contents in Chavara's Writings

We have seen that Jesus Christ is the centre of catechesis in Chavara's writings. However, he included many other catechetical elements also in his writings. For example he could give a solid Mariology in simple words through his *Āthmānuthāpam*. Mary, the Mother of God⁸⁶ is Immaculate.⁸⁷ She is the Mother of the Church⁸⁸ and the Mediatrix⁸⁹ of all the people before Jesus Christ. According to Chavara Mary is the perfect model of Christian discipleship.

The instruction on Sacraments is another important catechetical content in Chavara's writings. The focus is given to three Sacraments: Baptism, Holy Eucharist and Priesthood. He says that the grace of Baptism makes the faithful God's cherished children,⁹⁰ the Holy Eucharist feeds, strengthens and illuminates their body and soul⁹¹ and by the Priesthood one is following the footsteps of Jesus in total surrender, sacrifice and in carrying the cross.⁹² Chavara's writings pointed also on the divine

⁸⁵ Chavara, *The Letters*, 94.

⁸⁶ Cf. Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, XII: 18-19.

⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid. , XI: 205.

⁸⁸ Cf. Ibid. , XI: 477-478.

⁸⁹ Cf. Ibid. , XI: 365-368.

⁹⁰ Cf. Ibid. , I: 41.

⁹¹ Cf. Chavara, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 29.

⁹² Cf. Ibid. , 25.

call to religious life⁹³ and there he emphasises the virtues love,⁹⁴ humility and obedience.⁹⁵ According to him religious life is a higher state of life, a life in mystical spousal relationship with Jesus Christ.⁹⁶ In order to achieve this higher level he proposes a regular and systematic prayer life which consists of reading, solitude, meditative prayer and meditation as its four stages.⁹⁷

The directives Chavara wrote for the families is relevant even today in its catechetical perspective. It contains themes like importance of love in the family, respect for the parents, truthfulness, importance of liturgy and prayer, relationships and friendships, earning and use of money, moral codes, dignity of work, practice of virtues, habit of reading good books, disciplined life, vocational guidance, Christian education of children etc.⁹⁸ Another important content of catechesis in Chavara's writings is Eschatology. He explains the themes like resurrection⁹⁹ and the second coming of Jesus¹⁰⁰ in his *Āthmānuthāpam*. In his *Dirge* he gives a theology of death,¹⁰¹ theology of Purgatory,¹⁰² the communion of the saints¹⁰³ etc. which are also important in catechesis. The catechetical value of *Anasthasia's Martyrdom* is nothing but it gives true Christian witness. According to Chavara's writings the seed of faith

⁹³ Cf. Chavara, *The Letters*, 70.

⁹⁴ Cf. Ibid. , 71.

⁹⁵ Cf. Ibid. , 70.

⁹⁶ Cf. Ibid. , 77.

⁹⁷ Cf. Ibid. , 85.

⁹⁸ Cf. Ibid. , 102-117.

⁹⁹ Cf. Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, X: 21-28.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Ibid. , VI: 77-80.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Chavara, *Dirge*: 20-30.

¹⁰² Cf. Ibid. , 359-366.

¹⁰³ Cf. Ibid. , 1065-1070.

is a gratuitous gift from God. It has to grow and to become mature so that the faithful may be able to live and die for this faith, faith in Jesus Christ.

6. Catechetical Maxims of Chavara

The sayings of great men are always good to remember and to meditate on them. So some of the selected words of Chavara are given below:

- a. Meditation is a free and friendly colloquy with God (*CHF*¹⁰⁴, 2).
- b. Above all, learn the art of loving Jesus Christ. Stay constantly in His presence. Walk along with Him. Converse with Him continuously (*The Letters*, 82).
- c. The purpose of the religious life in short is to love the Lord wholeheartedly and follow Him in His footsteps, bringing your neighbour also to Him (*CHF*, 25).
- d. The shadow of a venial sin is more frightful than the devils (*CHF*, 30).
- e. If you observe charity, humility, neatness and promptness in what concerns you, you will be happy as well as the world around you (*The Letters*, 67).
- f. Avoid wasting your time in useless conversation (*The Letters*, 85).
- g. Love one another and forgive mutually each one's faults and shortcomings (*The Letters*, 103).
- h. A small lamp that would render light steadily and long is much better than a hay stack that will blaze brightly forth and be put out in a moment (*The Letters*, 105).
- i. It is not rich relatives and friends that will bring you benefit and happiness, but those who lead orderly lives and are God-fearing (*The Letters*, 106).
- j. A Christian family should not be a place for speaking ill of others and for gossiping (*The Letters*, 106).

¹⁰⁴ *CHF* is an abbreviation used for *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*

- k. A man of honour does not sit idle (*The Letters*, 10).
- l. Idleness is the mother of all vices, especially of the habit of drinking (*The Letters*, 107).
- m. The days of your life that do not see some noble action done, may be counted as deleted from your life (*The Letters*, 108).
- n. Desire that others may love you rather than fear you (*The Letters*, 108).
- o. Do not fail to give as much as you can by way of charity (*The Letters*, 108).
- p. Profligacy as well as stinginess is evil (*The Letters*, 108).
- q. Do not allow a stolen article to be retained in your house. Such a house will be burnt down (*The Letters*, 108).
- r. Never withhold just wages from labourers or make undue delay in paying them, because that is an offence that cries out to God for justice (*The Letters*, 109).
- s. The highest wealth of a family is piety and fear of God (*The Letters*, 109).
- t. Parents, understand that your most important duty and responsibility is to bring up your children well. They are the treasures entrusted to you by God (*The Letters*, 112).
- u. One should be neither too stern nor too lenient with one's children. Too much of indulgence will make them proud and too much of severity and punishment will make them desperate, shameless and weak of intellect (*The Letters*, 114).
- v. Don't teach the children to tell lies and to use cunning means under the excuse that this is the way of the world (*The Letters*, 114).
- w. When children are old enough to determine their vocation, they should be given full freedom to follow their bent of mind; it is God who determines the nature of their vocation and it is their personal business to make the choice (*The Letters*, 115).

- x. Even before the parents die let the children live in separate establishments. Write out the will or partition deed in time; or else, after your death you will be responsible for the sins caused by their disputes and quarrels (*The Letters*, 115).
- y. Keep away from mortal sin that will engender fear of death and when you realize that you have sinned mortally, at once through confession or a perfect act of contrition seek pardon of the sin (*The Letters*, 119).
- z. Of all the helps given to a man, the greatest is that given to him at the moment of death (*The Letters*, 119).

7. Conclusion

God became man in order to bring life to the entire humankind. Jesus says in the Gospel of John, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn. 10:10). The life that is given by Jesus has to reach each and every human person. Catechesis aims to help the human persons to grow and become mature in this life. A catechetical educator or faith formator is a person who plays the role of an agent in this process. Hence, Chavara can be attributed as a catechetical educator or a faith formator in this sense. His whole life was for the upliftment of the human persons by sharing the life of Jesus Christ. He could accomplish this through his words and deeds. His writings prove this in a special way.

Chavara wrote what he had seen, heard and experienced in his time. So it contains history, life witnesses, personal reflections and experiences. When he wrote he was influenced by the socio-cultural background of his own time. So everything he has written may not be valid or relevant in today’s situation. But from the catechetical perspective, there are relevant themes and contents in it. His writings have the catechetical thrust. It aims to catechise all people- children, parents, family members, parishioners, religious, priests etc. - in order to make them more and more in the life of Jesus Christ. So, in short, we can say that there are relevant elements in

the writings of Chavara which can lead the people of today towards the Kingdom of God to which the entire process of catechesis aims.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Blessed Chavara was a heroic son of the Syro-Malabar Church. We tried to see his main contributions in the Church from its catechetical perspective. Many of his works proved that he was a catechetical educator of his time. The Syro-Malabar Church is ever grateful to him for his extra ordinary and enthusiastic attempts in the Church for the faith formation and the spiritual renewal of the faithful.

It is certain that Chavara could touch all the areas of human endeavours in the Church. For the faith formation of the people of God he made the first steps in many things: the first indigenous religious congregation for men, the first Sanskrit School, the first Catholic printing press, the first Indian religious congregation for women. He was the first to edit and publish the East Syrian Breviary and prepared the first liturgical calendar in the Syro-Malabar Church. It was through his efforts first prayer books in Malayalam were printed at Mannanam. He started several religious houses in different parts of Kerala and started seminaries for the education and formation of clergy. He started also forty hours adoration, a house for the dying and destitute, gave attention to catechumens and took initiative to start schools attached to parish churches. Above all he played the role of a good shepherd in order to defend the faith of his people during the period of Rokos schism in the Syro-Malabar Church. All these show his pastoral zeal and a catechetical mind.

Chavara was a great visionary and he took several concrete steps in order to form and reform the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church. He could give a prophetic and courageous leadership in the Church. The religious congregation he established was totally dedicated to the faith formation and spiritual renewal of the faithful in the Church. Retreat preaching, Sunday sermons and their all other pastoral activities were related to the faith formation of the faithful.

The establishment of the seminary by Chavara was the result of his strong conviction. He was convinced that the spiritual renewal of the people depends on the holiness, knowledge, wisdom and proper leadership of the priests. In order to make them holy, efficient and well trained he started a systematic seminary in Kerala. He gave more importance to spiritual life and his efforts for the spiritual renewal of the clergy as well as the laity were really fruitful. His liturgical reformation was a help for priests as well as laity for their spiritual enrichment. Many devotional practices such as the Way of the Cross, forty hours adoration etc. could maintain the spiritual life of the people, in the midst of various religions, worldly temptations, trials and sufferings of life.

Another important thing we have to ever remember is that it is because of the initiative of Chavara to start schools that the Catholic Church in Kerala became very active in the educational field now.¹ He firmly believed that progress of a society could possible only through knowledge and wisdom. He considered education as central factor for any basic development. With this conviction he started schools and took initiative to provide noon meals to the poor, to admit all the children to the schools without the distinction of caste and creed and took steps to attract *dalit* children to schools by providing them text books, clothes etc.² His contribution of press in the communication field and other contributions in the social field are also revolutionary and unforgettable.³ He desired to build up the faith on the strong foundations of wisdom, knowledge and personal conviction.

It was the prophetic vision of Chavara that led him to establish a religious congregation for women. He trained them to the channels of faith formation through family apostolate, schools, boarding etc. He could foresee the integral growth of the

¹ Cf. A. Shreedharamenon, "Renaissance Leader Who Walked Ahead of His Time," *Journal of St. Thomas Christians* 16 (January- March 2005): 60.

² Cf. Ibid.

³ Cf. Kanjiramattathil, 115.

women and children of the Church through their pastoral activities. The motto of this Congregation is “Remain united to Me in contemplation and consecrated to Me in action.”⁴ In the catechetical perspective this congregation is meant for the Christian formation of the people of God especially women and children.

The time of Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church was a golden period of renewal. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “Periods of renewal in the Church are also intense moments of catechesis.”⁵ Through his words and deeds Chavara could catechise the people of his time. Whatever he did was meant for the integral development of the society as well as individuals and the Syro-Malabar Church as a whole. He could encompass the social, cultural, moral, physical, psychological and spiritual realms of human development. All he did were the means and ways of catechesis, through which the Christian formation of the people occurred.

One of the important contributions of Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church was his writings. The analysis that we had shows that they are rich in catechetical contents. The centre of the catechetical message- Jesus Christ- is the focus of his entire written work. According to Chavara, Jesus Christ is the centre of Christian life and His Cross is the instrument of salvation.⁶ Hence through his writings he could convey to his people the central message as Jesus Christ and salvation through His Cross.

Chavara’s writings can be considered as a mini catechism compared to the four parts of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: the profession of faith,⁷ the celebration- liturgy,⁸ life in Christ⁹ and prayer.¹⁰ Jesus Christ is the centre of his

⁴ C.M.C. *Constitutions* (Aluva: Mount Carmel Generalate, 1998), no. 008.

⁵ CCC 8.

⁶ Cf. Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, VIII: 25- 40.

⁷ Cf. CCC 26- 1065.

⁸ Cf. Ibid. , no. 1066- 1690.

meditation, reflection and message. The whole Christ event is presented in his writings, especially in his *Āthmānuthāpam*. The content of faith which is expressed in the Creed of the Catholic Church is presented very well here. The matters of faith, faith in the Holy Trinity: the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, Sacraments, the second coming of Jesus, Last Judgement, eternal life, Purgatory etc. contained in it. The teachings of the Church on Blessed Virgin Mary are explained well. The second part of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the celebration of the liturgy and its importance are also seen in his writings. Chavara gives emphasis to a life in Christ. For this purpose he gives moral codes to the families and timely instructions to the religious and priests. His *Letters* and *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father* are enriched with these. His writings, *Dirge* and *Anasthasia's Martyrdom* also provide enough guidelines for true Christian life and they call for true Christian witness and union with Jesus Christ, the objective of catechesis. As a man of prayer he could include the importance of prayer also in his writings and he invites all the faithful to take efforts to attain higher degrees of prayer.

This study was a humble attempt to find out the catechetical contributions of Blessed Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church and to analyse the themes from his writings which have catechetical value. With all our limitations- shortage of time, lack of availability of important sources, difficulties in language (many of the books and articles available were in Malayalam) etc. - we are trying to complete this study by totally depending on the works and studies of different authors. Perhaps the study throws light on various areas of his catechetical contributions. There is scope for further studies in these areas. Each area needs to study in depth to understand and appreciate his contributions in the catechetical field. A comparative study of his writings with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, study on family catechesis based on his letters, elaborate study of the catechetical contents such as the Creed, the Holy

⁹ Cf. Ibid. , no. 1691- 2557.

¹⁰ Cf. Ibid. , no. 1558- 2865.

Trinity, Liturgy and Sacraments, Christian life, prayer life, death, eternal life etc. and religious vocation, priesthood, pastoral ministry, human and social development etc. are some of the possible areas which can be further developed. There is also possibility to develop a spirituality which can lead to the objective of catechesis and union with Jesus Christ.

Blessed Chavara, an authentic son of the Syro-Malabar Church, was admired by Pope John Paul II during the Beatification ceremony on 8 February 1986. I would like to conclude this study with a quote from his homily:

Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara was born here in Kerala, and for all of his sixty-five years of earthly life he laboured generously for the renewal and enrichment of the Christian life. His deep love for Christ filled with apostolic zeal and made him especially careful to promote the unity of the Church. With great generosity he collaborated with others, especially brother priests and religious, in the work of salvation.... Father Kuriakose's life was dedicated to the service of the Syro-Malabar Church. Under his leadership or inspiration, a good number of apostolic initiatives were undertaken: the establishment of seminaries for the education and formation of the clergy, the introduction of annual retreats, a publishing house for Catholic works, a house to care for the destitute and dying, schools for general education and programmes for the training of catechumens. He contributed to the Syro-Malabar liturgy and spread devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Family. In particular, he dedicated himself to encouraging and counselling Christian families, convinced as he was of the fundamental role of the family in the life of society and the Church. But no apostolic cause was dearer to the heart of this great man of faith than that of the unity of the harmony within the Church. It was as if he had always before his mind the prayer of Jesus, on the night before his sacrifice on the cross: "That they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us" (Jn. 17:21).... His success in this, as in all his many undertakings, was undoubtedly due to the intense charity and prayer, which characterized his daily life, his close communion with Christ on earth.¹¹

¹¹ John Paul II, "A Heroic Son of the Church in India" (Extracts from the homily during Beatification of Chavara, 08-02-1986), Paul Kalluveettil and Paulachan Kochappilly, eds. , *The Lord of Heaven and Earth: Chavara Studies in Honour of Fr. Lucas Vithuvattikal, CMI* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 80-82.

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